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5/6th December: Manchester, Museum of Transport
1st January 1999: King Alfred Event, Winchester
19-21st February 1999: Brighton Model World, Brighton Centre

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666 Turkey, Buses September 1998 (Dig). 60 minutes by Dave Spencer. Lots of Optare Spectra shots in Istanbul and other continental height double deckers there and Ankara. Also scenes in Konya and Izmir.

664 Warminster, UK Preserved Buses September 1998 (Dig). 60 minutes by Dave Spencer with nearly 30 preserved buses running a network of services based upon Warminster, Wilts railway station.

663 Staffordshire, UK Buses September 1998 (Dig). 60 minutes by Dave Spencer visiting Hanley, Stafford, Rugeley, Burton & Stoke. Introduction of buses in corporate First Group livery and Midland Red Arriva livery.

662 Glasgow, UK Buses September 1998 (Dig). 60 minutes filmed by Dave Spencer in bright conditions. Mainly First Group Red livery plus Stagecoach and Arriva. Also scenes at Hamilton bus station.

661 Edinburgh, UK Buses September 1998 (Dig). 60 minutes by Dave Spencer including introduction of corporate First Group livery, open top service. All operators as seen in bright diffused light.

660 Sussex, UK Buses August 1998 (Dig). 60 minutes by Dave Spencer starts with Eastbourne for new Spectras then on to Brighton and Hove, Worthing and Lewes, plus open top services in Eastbourne on Bank Holiday Monday.

659 East Anglia, UK Buses August 1998 (Dig). Filmed by Dave Spencer in August 1998, we start our journey amongst the friendly bus crews of Norwich, then move to Gt. Yarmouth and Lowestoft where thunderstorms beckon us back to the car and on to terminate in Ipswich, safely back in sunshine.

658 Merseyside, UK Buses July/August 1998 (Dig). 60 minutes by Dave Spencer starts in Liverpool city centre in bright sunshine (rare in 1998!) then on to St. Helens and finishes at Birkenhead in the rain.

657 Yorkshire, UK Buses August 1998 (Dig). 60 minutes by Dave Spencer. On a bright summers day we visit Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield. Mainline, now Firstbus Group.

645 West Midlands, UK Buses July 1998 (Dig). This 60 minute programme takes us to Birmingham and Coventry with bright weather illuminating the buses at Coventry bus station and Birmingham city centre.

644 Blackpool, UK Trams July 1998 (Dig). This 60 minute programme by Dave Spencer and Rob Hatch covers the build up and Day Of The Tram centenary cavalcade, including trials of rebuilt car 707 and despite high winds and rain, the formation of the cavalcade and run to Fleetwood.

643 London, UK Buses July 1998 (Dig). The main features of this programme are Edgware, Golders Green and Kingston upon Thames. Introduction of Arriva livery.

642 The Shires (Arriva), UK Buses June/July 1998 (Dig). 60 minute programme by Dave Spencer starting in Hemel Hempstead then on to Luton and finishing at Watford. Introduction of Arriva livery just started.

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Mercedes Benz Hopper Badgerline £11.50
VRT 111 - Blue Bus Gt Yarmouth £11.50
AEC Routemaster - GM Buses £11.50
Alexander Y - Sheffield Corp'n £11.50
Plaxton Pointer - Arriva £11.50
Alexander Atlantean - Yorkshire Woollen £11.50
Bedford TK Shortbox - Roadline £11.50

September
Bristol RE - Trent £11.50
Mercedes Benz Hoppa - City Line £11.50
Bristol VRT Series 3 - Maidstone & District £11.50
Leyland National - Blue Bus £11.50
Bristol FLF - Baxter's of Airdrie £11.50
BET single decker - Crosville £11.50
Leyland Atlantean/MCW - Selneq £11.50
Bedford TK dropside - Greene King £11.50

October
Bristol RE - Crosville £11.50
Leyland PD2 - City of Exeter £11.50
AEC RF - London Country £11.50
Daimler CVG6 - Selneq £11.50
Mercedes Benz Hoppa - Maidstone & District £11.50
Leyland Atlantean/MCW - Lancaster City £11.50
AEC Regal 1/2 cab BET De-Luxe - South Wales £11.50
AEC Ergo 4 axle flatbed - B.R.S. £11.50

November
Bristol RE - Southern National £11.50
Mercedes Benz Hoppa - Thamesway £11.50
BET Single Deck - Yorkshire Traction £11.50
Alexander Y Type - Lancaster City £11.50
AEC Routemaster - Halifax £11.50
Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer - Blue Bus Gt. Yarmouth £11.50
Leyland National - London Utd. £11.50
Leyland Atlantean De-Luxe - Leeds City Transport £11.50

ORIGINAL OMNIBUS COMPANY
1st Quarter Releases
Corporate Image

43217 Volvo 3 Axle Olympian - Stagecoach Hong Kong (Jan) £17.50
43606 Northern Counties Palatine 11 - Arriva Northumbria Ltd (Jan) £13.50
43310 Plaxton Premiere Stagecoach Express (Feb) £14.50
43408 Plaxton Beaver 2 - First Midland Red (Feb) £12.50
43407 Plaxton Beaver 2 - Arriva Medway Towns (Mar) £12.50
43608 Northern Counties Palatine 11 - First Badgerline (Mar) £13.50

Classics
43705 BUT 9641T Trolleybus - Newcastle Cor (Feb) £14.50
43906 Guy Arab Utility Bus - Southdown Motor Services (Feb) £13.50
43905 Daimler CW Utility Bus - London Greenline (Mar) £13.50
42606 Bedford OB Coach - Guinness (Mar) £12.50

Leisure & Pleasure
42722 Van Hool Alizee - The Kings Ferry £13.50
43116 Leyland Lynx Mk 11 - Maidstone & District (Park & Ride) (Jan) £13.50
42910 Optare Delta - Blackpool & Fylde Blue Buses (Jan) £13.50
42723 Van Hool Alizee - Seagull Coaches (Feb) £13.50
43309 Plaxton Premiere - Brighton & Hove Bus & Coach Co. (Mar) £14.50
43803 Plaxton Excalibur - Oxford Citylink X90 (Mar) £14.50

Centenary
43010 Leyland Olympian/ECW - PMT (Jan) £13.50
43115 Leyland Lynx MK1 - PMT Interurban X64 (Feb) £13.50

All models have very limited production runs. Please order early as we may not be able to guarantee delivery for late orders.

CHRIS BRIERLEY MODELS

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ORIGINAL OMNIBUS CO 1998 RELEASES
NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1998

OOC SALE
Some you may have missed

Cat No.	Available Price	Sale Price
FOCUS ON WALES		
43111 Leyland Lynx Mk11 Cardiff Bus	Dec £12.50	
STAGECOACH BUSES		
42811 Dennis Dart - Stagecoach Busways	Oct. £12.50	
HISTORY, MYSTERY SEASIDE & FUN		
43307 Plaxton Premiere - Epsom Coaches	Oct. £13.50	
43804 Plaxton Excalibur - Shearings	Nov. £13.50	
43308 Plaxton Excalibur - Skills Motor Coaches Ltd	Dec. £13.50	
42721 Van Hool Alizee - W Robinson & Sons (Tours) Ltd	Dec. £13.50	
NATIONAL EXPRESS		
43405 Plaxton Beaver 2 - Travel Merry Hill	Nov. £11.50	
THE GO AHEAD GROUP		
43113 Leyland Lynx Mk1 - Brighton & Hove Bus & Coach Co. Ltd	Dec. £12.50	
CELTIC COLLECTION		
43304 Plaxton Premiere - Bus Eireann/Euroline	Oct. £13.50	
43603 Northern Counties Palatine II - Greater Glasgow	Nov. £12.50	
43802 Plaxton Excalibur - Ulsterbus	Dec. £13.50	
LONDON SCENE		
42103 AEC Tower Wagon - London Transport	Nov. £11.50	
INDEPENDENTS		
43214 3 Axle Leyland Olympian - Capital Citybus	Oct. £19.99	
43114 Leyland Lynx Mk1 - John Fishwick & Sons	Nov. £12.50	
40205 Leyland Leopard, Ballykissangel	£7.99	
40308 Burlington Seagull Ribble	£9.99	
40602 Leyland PS1, Isle of Man	£7.99	
41801 Leyland, Ribble Breakdown	£9.99	
42505 Bedford OB 1/4 lights, Malta	£7.99	
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42706 Van Hool Alizee, Bakers Dolphin	£8.99	
42709 Van Hool Alizee, Eavesway Travel	£8.99	
42710 Van Hool Alizee, Railair	£8.99	
42711 Van Hool Alizee, Speedlink	£8.99	
42803 Dennis Dart, City Bus Standard	£9.99	
42901 Optare Delta, Gateshead Shuttle	£7.99	
43001 Leyland Olympian Wear Buses	£7.99	
43102 Leyland Lynx Mk 1, Wycombe	£7.99	
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47130 AEC Reliance, Oxford City	£7.99	
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47813 Weymann Trolleybus, Brighton	£8.99	
47837 Leyland PD1A, North Western	£8.99	
47838 Leyland PS1, Birch Bros	£7.99	
47839 Leyland PD1, Eastern Counties	£7.99	
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47852 Bristol L, Maidstone and District	£7.99	
47854 Bristol K, Western National	£7.99	
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47858 Bristol K, Caledonian	£7.99	
47859 Bristol K, Bristol Tramways	£7.99	
47880 Bristol L, Bath Tramways	£7.99	
47888 Bristol L, Eastern Counties	£7.99	
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47905 Leyland Leopard, Safeway	£7.99	
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47944 Leyland PD2, Newcastle Corp.	£8.99	

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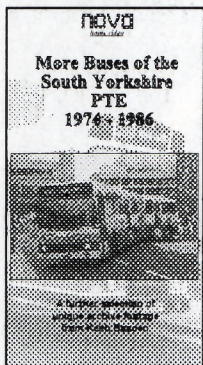
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November 1998

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December 1998

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The last ECW-bodied Bristol in service at First Thamesway's garage at Hadleigh, Essex, is this VRT, 3113 (XHK 218X). Hadleigh has a tradition of Bristol/ECW stretching back more than 60 years. 3113 has been due for withdrawal twice in the last six months, but was newly repainted in the latest livery — always intended just to be applied to single-deckers — during September. It won the award for the best 1980s double-decker at Showbus, Duxford.

JOHN G. LIDSTONE



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Cover:

The first articulated bus for FirstGroup features a new body by Wrights and Volvo B10LA chassis.

REGULARS

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Stephen Morris builds up his muscles at London United's Hounslow open day — and confuses a few passengers into the bargain

EXPOCOACH '98 20

New styles for next season from Ayats and Neoplan, and other newcomers at an upbeat show

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Atlanteans galore at Leyland — including this ECW one from Ribble.

PHILIP LAMB



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Cannon's first shot at the market — a newcomer at Expo Coach.

All around us we seem to be seeing inconsistencies with John Prescott's theoretical brave new world for the bus, which he promised us in the White Paper, and reality on the ground. No, we're not about to bang on again about the shortcomings of our local bus service. But just down the road from here, in that Nirvana of decent bus services and cheap fares, where they're soon to get a body called Transport for London over which the Mayor will have jurisdiction (imagine — Transport Supremo Geoffrey Archer!) the annual round of above-inflation fares increases has been announced for 1999. They're not as bad as the *Evening Standard* would like you to believe, but surely it is unbelievable that the Government which is trying to get us out of our cars and on to public transport should insist on a public transport body increasing fares in real terms. What sort of a message does such a move give to anyone contemplating the modal switch, when fares already seem high compared with car use anyway?

Another anomaly is highlighted in a press release issued by PHH Vehicle Management Services. It points out that Mr Prescott was encouraging companies to introduce subsidised transport for their staff, to reduce car dependency. However, while the White Paper side-stepped the issue of taxing non-residential car parking spaces, subsidised transport is considered a benefit in kind and is therefore taxable. As it's difficult to quantify the additional tax burden on each individual, the Treasury is instead taxing companies which provide subsidised transport to their workers to reduce their car dependency!

White Papers alone will do nothing to help the mess our transport system is now in; actions always did speak louder than words. Even when the words are delivered by John Prescott!

STEPHEN MORRIS

THE MONTH'S CURRENT ISSUES

around the industry

MAYFLOWER SUCCESS WITH DENNIS

As anticipated last month Mayflower Corporation is the successful buyer of Dennis Group.

Mayflower was able to announce on 19 October that it had received acceptances for its offer representing 20.6% of Dennis's shareholding which, with its own holding of 29.9% of Dennis's shares, gave it overall control of the business. Mayflower's chief executive John Simpson is now on the board of Dennis, while Mayflower's John Fleming has replaced Vanni Treves as Dennis chairman. Neville Chamberlain and Richard Owen have also left Dennis as non-executive directors and their places have been taken by David Donnelly and Terence Whitmore from Mayflower.

Meanwhile the final hurdle of acceptance of the merger by the Director of General of Fair Trading has also been cleared; it will not be referred to the Monopolies & Mergers Commission.

Originally Dennis and Henlys, Plaxton's parent company, had announced an intention to merge and

the automotive design and component manufacturing group Mayflower Corporation, which owns Walter Alexander, put in a counter bid for the business. The outcome of the battle means that Dennis and Alexander will now work in closer co-operation, while a technical agreement between Daimler-Benz and Mayflower looks likely to produce Denis models with Mercedes-Benz components in the future. Although Mayflower maintains that the Mercedes deal was quite separate from the Dennis acquisition, a Daimler-Benz spokesman told us that there would have been nothing over which to co-operate had Mayflower not been successful in its bid for Dennis.

Mayflower also has a major shareholding in American bus builder Metrotrans, through which it expects to supply Dennis chassis to the American market. Meanwhile Daimler-Benz has also increased its presence in the American market by acquiring Thomas Built, which has a 36% share of the massive market for schoolbuses in the USA.

ALEXANDER LOSES OUT IN TRANSLINK ORDERS

Translink, the Northern Ireland operator of Ulsterbus and Citybus, has announced the citybus element of the orders put out to competitive tender during the autumn. Announced so far are 85 Wright Renown-bodied Volvo B10BLEs and 10 Mercedes-Benz O.405Ns, four of which are articulated.

It is notable that Alexanders, which has a factory at Mallusk, on the outskirts of Belfast, has not been successful with any of the tenders; this is the first time since 1967 that the company has not been favoured with orders from Northern Ireland's main operators.

Orders for coaches have not yet been announced, but are expected to be won by one of the mainstream coach manufacturers.

Ulsterbus and Citybus currently run buses with Alexander (Belfast) bodywork on Bristol RELL, Leyland Leopard, Leyland Tiger, Volvo B10M and Volvo B10L chassis, and have previously run Leyland Atlanteans, Daimler Fleetlines, Bedfords and Bristol LHs bodied there. It has not previously turned to Ballymena-based Wrights for full-size citybuses. Mercedes-Benz too is a new supplier of large buses to the company.

JOINT VENTURE SETS SIGHTS ON UK

The European Commission has agreed to the joint venture between Renault and Iveco to combine their bus building activities. A new company is to be established in Barcelona on 1 January, though no name has yet been announced.

Renault and Iveco together will be the third largest bus producer in the world, and expects to grow further by acquisition. Elios Pascual, chief executive officer of the new company, has committed the company to a stronger presence in the UK market, which is currently the second largest in Europe. Renault is virtually non-existent in the UK as a supplier of full-size vehicles, though Iveco has had a successful year selling EuroRider and EuroMidi coaches here, and has registered nearly 50 since January. As reported on p20, Iveco has also launched one of the first 18tonne vehicles on two axles for the UK, the Beulas-bodied El Mundo on EuroRider chassis, in time for the relaxation of axle weight limits from 1 January. So far success in the British citybus market has eluded Iveco, and its one double-decker, latterly owned by Filers of Ilfracombe, is up for sale.

TIMELINE'S REMAINING BUSES GO TO FIRSTGROUP

The bus operations of one of the remaining major independent operators in Greater Manchester has passed to First Manchester. Timeline, based in Leigh, has sold its operations to its larger neighbour, but is retaining its coach operations, which have been growing in the last couple of years or so.

Timeline was formed as a management buyout of Shearings' bus operations in 1992 and had grown to nearly 90 buses before selling its remote operations in Shropshire, Cheshire and south Manchester to Arriva in May ('News', Buses June). Nearly 50 buses have passed to First Manchester in a £3 million deal; they have gone to existing First Manchester garages as no property was involved in the sale.

Q-DRIVE IN RECEIVERSHIP

Q-Drive, owner of Limebourne, ScanCoaches and AVE Berkhof, is in administrative receivership and is currently being advertised for sale by the administrators. Its founder and chairman, Len Wright, has left the board of Prism Rail, the rail franchise operator which he and other bus industry managers, set up to take advantage of the railway privatisation process.

Though he began as a coach operator under his own name in 1977, Len Wright expanded into buses, being one of the first successful tenderers for London Transport bus services and also by acquiring all three parts of Alder Valley, which was split up as part of the National Bus Company privatisation process. His London bus operations later became London Buslines which was sold, along with the remaining part of the Alder Valley bus operations, the Bee Line, to CentreWest in March 1996 and is now part of FirstGroup. Other parts of Alder Valley had been sold to Stagecoach and British Bus, while the engineering part had become AVE Berkhof and remained part of Q-Drive. Based in Basingstoke it is the sole importer of Berkhof coachwork into the UK. Berkhof is currently setting up a new

company to take over the operations in Britain, with Pat Waterman remaining as managing director.

Q Drive Coaches includes 75 coaches under the Limebourne name, of which nearly 50 are Berkhof-bodied Dennis Javelins, and 40 under the Scan Coach name, a mixed fleet of which more recent additions are Berkhof-bodied, following Q-Drive's acquisition of the company in 1997. In addition to more conventional work, both fleets provide luxurious 27-seat coaches for another of Q-Drive's ventures, The Glider, which was an ambitious attempt to provide high-quality coach tours to the top end of the market and is understood to have been a contributory factor in the Group's difficulties.

Limebourne also runs London Transport services on routes C3, C10, 42 and 156, using 31 buses, six MetroRiders, six Marshall Minibuses on loan from London General for the C3, which London General passed over to Limebourne, and 19 Dennis Dart SLFs. Group turnover is some £20 million and it has leasehold premises in Battersea and Park Royal in addition to the Basingstoke site of AVE Berkhof.

GO AHEAD READY FOR TAKE-OFF

Go-Ahead Group has bought airport service provider GHI from Northwest Airlines and Delta Airlines. It has paid £27.5 million for the passenger and cargo handling and ramp services business, and Northwest and Delta have both signed continuing contracts with GHI for the use of certain airport services in the UK.

GHI's main operations are at Gatwick, Heathrow, Stansted and Manchester, and include Plane Handling Ltd, a cargo handling joint venture with Virgin Aviation Services. It also has passenger handling facilities, through joint ventures, in Frankfurt and in Ghana's capital Accra.

PSV REGISTRATION FIGURES

These figures show purpose-built psvs, with van-derived vehicles such as the Mercedes-Benz Vario, grouped together separately at the end. Purpose-built psvs include minibuses which are not derived from van chassis, such as the Optare MetroRider and Excel

Manufacturer	Sept 1998	Oct 1998	1998 total*
Bova	2 (0)	1 (2)	52 (46)
DAF	34 (6)	18 (7)	227 (115)
Dennis	81 (137)	112 (120)	1,071 (1,114)
Iveco	0 (2)	4 (0)	47 (28)
MAN	2 (0)	14 (5)	56 (18)
Mercedes-Benz	27 (3)	8 (3)	120 (28)
Optare	15 (31)	37 (13)	213 (185)
Scania	34 (19)	28 (15)	275 (193)
Volvo	80 (98)	109 (126)	1,424 (1,408)
Other British	0 (0)	0 (0)	15 (7)
Other imports	9 (3)	6 (7)	121 (122)
Total British	154 (212)	209 (187)	1,941 (1,861)
Total imports	130 (87)	128 (111)	1,680 (1,403)
Total			
purpose-built	284 (299)	337 (298)	3,621 (3,264)
Van-derived	134 (149)	67 (83)	1,126 (808)
Grand total	418 (448)	404 (381)	4,747 (4,072)

*Equivalent 1997 figures shown in brackets. Source — SMMT.

TWO NEW VOLVOS

Volvo has announced an updated version of its B6LE low-floor midibus. In all its forms the B6 has not been an unqualified success for Volvo, with National Express subsidiaries alone amongst major operators in standardising on the B6LE for midibus purchases.

The new version, the B6BLE, benefits from the introduction of the new B7L range, as it shares the B7L's independent front suspension, which not only improves ride quality but also increases the throat width between the front wheelarches by more than 100mm, to nearly 900mm. The front end is similar to the larger B10L, giving an 80mm reduction in frame height, to 305mm, compared with the B6LE, and creating a flat top to the frame for ease of bodybuilding. The air suspension is now electronically controlled to give quicker response times and reduce air consumption.

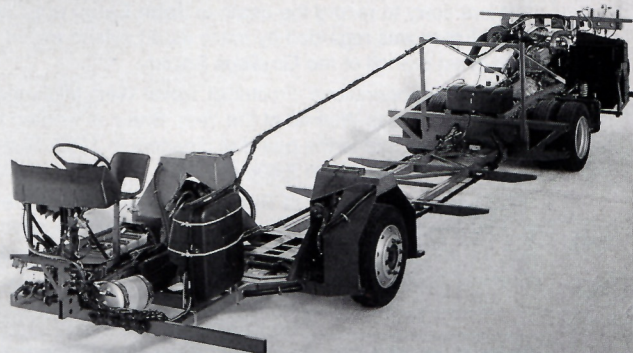
The B6BLE has been developed jointly by Volvo design teams at Irvine and Gothenburg in co-operation with Wrights, which latterly has been the only builder on the B6LE in Britain. Wright's Crusader body will be a full 2.5m wide, and the bus will be 10m or 10.8m long with a gross vehicle weight of 12.2tonnes. It is powered by the Volvo D6A six-litre engine and has a ZF automatic gearbox which automatically selects neutral when the bus is stationary.

The B6BLE will be built at Irvine at least until mid-2000, when bus production is planned to end there. Deliveries are due to begin early next year, and orders have already been received from First Mainline and Speedlink Airport Services.

Meanwhile the B7L's electronically-controlled independent front suspension has also been fitted to Volvo's new three-axle double-deck chassis for Hong Kong and Singapore. Unlike the UK low-floor double-decker, however, the new high-capacity double-decker is a derivative of the existing Olympian rather than part of the B7L range, and is to be called the Super Olympian. Three-axle Olympians have been built primarily for Hong Kong since 1983, and nearly 2,000 three-axle Olympians with air conditioning have been placed in service since 1988.

Thus the Super Olympian retains the Volvo 9.6litre D10A 285bhp engine mounted transversely at the rear and driving through ZF gearboxes. However the radiator has been resited from the front to a mid position on the offside to clear more space at the entrance and reduce pipe runs. The B7L-derived front suspension has been upgraded to 7.1tonnes for this application. Production starts at Irvine in December, with an order for 60 12m air-conditioned buses for Kowloon Motor Bus while 11.3m and 10.6m versions will follow in the first half of 1999.

The new Volvo B6BLE chassis.



DIARY DATES

24 November:

Omnibus Society meeting. Richard Leadbeater, managing director, Guide Friday. London Transport headquarters, 55 Broadway, London, SW1 (above St James's Park Underground station), 18.45hrs.

10 December:

Buses World Wide. Presentation on BWW visits to Stuttgart and Oporto by Norman Bartlett and Steve Guess. Fred Tallant Hall, Drummond Street, London NW1, 19.00hrs.

1 January:

Friends of King Alfred Buses. Winchester & West Hants running day, based on Winchester Broadway. Event sponsored by *Buses* and *Classic Bus*.

WELCOME ABOARD WINNERS

The winners of this year's NFBU/Optare Welcome Aboard Awards were announced at a special ceremony at the London Transport Museum on 4 November. This year's awards scheme, in which passengers are asked to nominate drivers, groups of drivers and operators for particularly good service, was supported by *Buses*, which, in addition to providing support behind the scenes, contributed to the winning driver's prize of a weekend away for two.

The winning driver was Dave Robinson from A1A Travel, Birkenhead, who received his award from Glenda Jackson, Transport Minister. Brighton & Hove won the best company award and drivers from Arriva Northumbria won the group of drivers award. Another driver from the north-east, Kennan Robinson, of Serene Travel, Bedlington, won a special award for schoolbus drivers and Brian Adams, a passenger with Bluebird Buses, Aberdeen, won an award for his submission.

More details next month.



Stephen Morris, editor of *Buses*, (centre) presents NFBU/Optare Welcome Aboard Bus Driver of the Year Dave Robinson from A1A Travel, Birkenhead with his cup and a cheque from Ian Allan Publishing towards his weekend away. Jim Green from Optare looks on.

BUS PEOPLE

Alan Kreppel, who left First Cymru during the summer, has been appointed managing director of Cardiff Bus, succeeding **Frank Yates** who is retiring. First Cymru's operations director **Peter Heath** and engineering director **Andy Bird** have also left the company.

Stagecoach has been restructuring its bus operations, to reduce the number of regions from four to three. As a result **Neil Renilson**, chairman of Stagecoach Scotland has left the company. A Stagecoach spokesman said, 'People often think of us as big in Scotland, but FirstGroup is much bigger. The size of our operation in Scotland doesn't justify a regional structure'. As a result Scotland and the North East are now together in one region under **Malcolm Howitt**, formerly managing director of Stagecoach Transit, the Midlands and North West is another region now, under **Les Warneford**, formerly managing director of Stagecoach Manchester, and **Tony Cox**, chairman of Stagecoach West, is now also chairman of Stagecoach South and Stagecoach London. **Barry Hinckley** became chairman of Stagecoach's UK bus operation as a whole in the summer and has been succeeded as engineering director by **Brian Juffs**.

We are sorry to record the death of **John Eaton** of Bromborough, Wirral, who died in August aged 86. Mr Eaton was regarded by many as a Leyland expert, and was chairman at one time of the North West branch of the Omnibus Society.

Julie Giles, operations director of Travel West Midlands, has been awarded the 1998 NatWest Midlands Business Woman of the Year. She has worked for TWM and its predecessors since 1988 and was appointed to the board of directors in 1997. She oversees 10 bus garages, operating 1,800 buses on 420 routes with 3,600 drivers.

Stephen Morris, editor of *Buses*, has been elected President of the Omnibus Society for 1999, in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the magazine, which occurs with the November issue next year. He will give his Presidential Address in London on 26 January and will host a Presidential Weekend based in Surrey in September.

DRAGONS IN MANCHESTER



Stagecoach Manchester is currently putting a batch of 20 Duple Metsec-bodied Dennis Dragon into service. They have returned from Stagecoach Kenya and the first five are entering service on MagicBus service 143.

Picture by JOHN YOUNG

SUNDERLAND SOLOS



Go Wear Buses has received eight Optare Solos for Washington town services. They are the first of a batch of 22 for Go Ahead North East. Picture: A. D. GLEN

IN BRIEF

The Restrictive Practices

Court has ended a price-fixing agreement between 10 operators in Merseyside. They include MTL, Arriva North West, CMT, PMT and First Manchester. Anti-competitive agreements were reached in 1995 in return for MTL pulling out of Manchester and what were then GMB North and GMB South pulling out of Merseyside.

The LPG-powered DAF SB220

now qualifies for grant funding under the Government's Powershift initiative. As it is capable of producing NOx emissions 75% better than Euro 2 standard operators can receive funding for 75% of the additional cost over a diesel bus.

Volvo and Deutz have now

finalised their agreement which will see Deutz supplying small and medium-sized engines to Volvo. Volvo will produce engines only in the eight to 16-litre range and will make these available to Deutz.

OPRAF, the rail regulator, has approved Stagecoach's purchase of 49% of Virgin Rail. New bus/rail links will be introduced as part of the deal, with £1 add-on fares for rail passengers to use local bus and tram services.

Both FirstGroup and EYMS

Group have committed themselves to using ultra low sulphur diesel on a fleetwide basis.

The PSV Circle is holding a reunion meeting to mark 40 years of meetings in Manchester at the Waldorf Hotel (corner of Gore Street and Roby Street, just off Piccadilly), from 19.30hrs on 25 November, at which *Buses* readers are welcome.

The cover price of *Buses* will increase to £2.75 with effect from the January 1999 issue. New subscription rates will be announced in due course.

FIRST'S FIRST ARTIC *Completed*

Robert Wright & Sons has now built its first articulated bus. What is claimed to be the UK's first low-floor artic is built on a Volvo B10LA chassis for FirstGroup and carries First Manchester fleetnames. It is an 18m long 55-seater, capable of carrying at least 85 additional standees to give a total capacity of 140 plus. The new Wright body is called the Fusion.

As is well-known FirstGroup has ordered 40 articulated Volvos with Wright bodywork as part of its 1998/99 order for 800 buses, and account for £7 million of the £80 million order, giving a price of £175,000 per bus. They are to be used in Manchester, Glasgow and Leeds, and the first carries First Manchester fleetnames.

The Wright body, as will be seen from the photograph, has a strong visual affinity to the rest of Wright's range of low-floor buses; indeed Wright already builds its Liberator body on the rigid version of the B10L, although of late its production on Volvo has been concentrated on the Renown on the less complex B10BLE. For the first time for Wright the Fusion uses a Multiplex electrical system, which controls lights and other electrical components by electrical impulses sent along a single wire and uses a ring main for power supply, thereby considerably reducing the considerable complexity of a

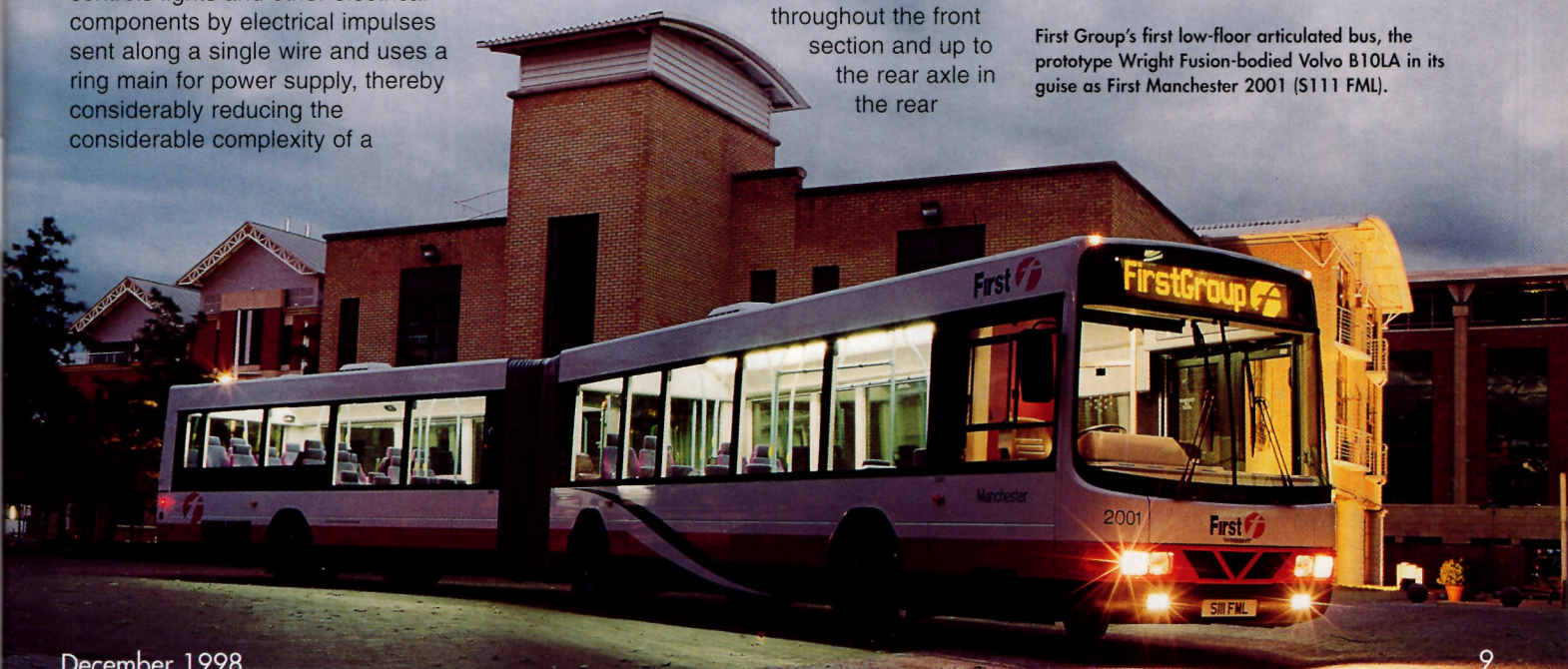
conventional wiring loom — something which is even more complicated on an articulated bus. More than half of the body parts on the Fusion, and 80% of its glazing (which is bonded, with double glazing to conform to FirstGroup's normal standard) is common to other Wright-bodied vehicles. It uses the Alusuisse bolted aluminium structure pioneered in the UK by Wrights but now also used by Optare and East Lancs. Unlike other Wright low-floor buses it carries the air tanks in the roof; the roof structure is designed to take 70% of the stresses transmitted by the low-floor chassis and is capable of carrying the weight of the tanks.

Although it had previously been announced that some of the Fusions would be on the first Volvo B7LA articulated chassis to be built, FirstGroup has now decided instead to standardise on the articulated version of the more familiar B10L. The B10LA chassis uses the Volvo DH10A 9.6litre horizontal six-cylinder engine, rated at 285bhp and driving through a ZF HP590 automatic gearbox. The engine is offset to the nearside and the floor is flat throughout the front section and up to the rear axle in the rear

section. It has full air suspension, independent at the front. The Wright body has extra wide doors, one at the front and the other in the rear section, and an experimental one-way gate is fitted at the rear door to prevent fare dodgers from boarding out of site of the driver.

Wright maintains that the Fusion offers 'the levels of comfort and convenience more often associated with much more expensive trams and light rail vehicles', an interesting comment when taken in the context of having 85+ standees! The Fusion is to be put through an intensive research and development programme, as Wright has not had experience of articulated buses before, so it could well be that Travel West Midlands will be the first operator actually to put a low-floor artic into service; the first of its 11 Mercedes O.405Ns is due in January for the Birmingham-Walsall service.

First Group's first low-floor articulated bus, the prototype Wright Fusion-bodied Volvo B10LA in its guise as First Manchester 2001 (S111 FML).



SERVICE EXTRA SERVICE EXTRA SERVICE EXTRA

All over the south of England, nice low floor buses with attractive clean interiors, welcome aboard signs and

helpful customer care trained drivers aren't turning up when the timetable says they will, or at all, due to, stop me if you've heard this before, staff shortages. And when one tries to find out more one senses that much of the recent progress on customer service is being thrown away.

If you're lucky, you get a tired but helpful controller who confirms what's missing, offers apologies and explanations (sometimes at the expense of 'management') and suggests ways of keeping apprised of absences. If one's unlucky, anecdotal evidence suggests you get into a slanging match about which garage is responsible for which bus, a shrugging announcement that they're short of drivers and the general impression that the company really isn't too bothered if its advertised services don't run. On one occasion recently a regular passenger of a big group which claims to 'serve' her local area was told she was lying when she complained to an inspector that she had waited an hour on a 10min service. Meanwhile the driver harangued the inspector's colleague for all the flak she was taking from similarly delayed passengers!

This has the makings of a customer service and public relations disaster, which will eventually, as usual, become a revenue one. I may be wrong, but I do not detect in any company a coherent, managed PR response to the current problems or even ten minutes of telephone technique training — individual staff being left to fend off increasingly disaffected would-be customers with whatever approach takes their fancy.

I've been back on the 19 in outer Manchester. Some of the posters offering free rides seem to have gone — notably the one offering same if the driver is unfriendly and unhelpful. Why, I wonder, as all the drivers on this service seem extremely friendly and helpful, the second on my latest excursion depositing me considerably nearer to my hotel than the nearest stop. I don't think

More comment from JULIAN OSBORNE on the service element of bus operations

one can comment often enough that stops are too frequently sited for the convenience of the most gormless drivers of other vehicles rather than at bus passenger traffic objectives. The stop outside my office is nowhere near any traffic objective, boarders having to walk from a crossroads several hundred yards away (usually backwards to keep an eye for approaching buses) and disembarkers having to make this journey in reverse, unless they vault the railings placed down the middle of the road to reach their houses. For a while during roadworks last year, buses pulled up in the road at the crossroads but this did not, of course, last!

Talking of Manchester and my comments a couple of columns ago about 'rover' tickets, Robert Appleton sent me details of the Wayfarer Ticket which allows one free rein by public transport throughout Greater Manchester and slightly beyond. Excellent value and spoilt only for bus passengers by the fact that it can't be purchased on a bus. This ticket comes with excellent publicity literature and Bernard Allan sent me an assortment of same from Ireland covering various different types of publicity. He suggests that all tourist attractions should give details of public transport including bus access; I agree but, when large bus groups launching advertising campaigns to encourage bus use, don't bother when inviting people to the launch ('Millar's Tales', *Buses May*) we've a way to go on changing mindsets, haven't we?

So now some good news. Gold Service in Halifax on First Calderline was launched at the beginning of October as part of a sustained attack on passenger decline supported by customer service training. I attended some of the training, as you know, but will have to elaborate on its results next month, as work summons me to Switzerland before press date. Now there's a place that can run buses!!

Staff shortages are creating reliability problems.

County warning to 'non-Arriva' buses

THE FENTON FILE

A coach from Yorkshire which may not be all it appears to be; another candidate for MIKE FENTON's scrutiny

Not all coaches are what they appear to be. YHT 888 carries a Leyland Tiger badge — but is a Leopard. Its Plaxton body appears to be a Supreme VI — but was built five years before that model saw the light of day. Adding further intrigue is the combination of Viewmaster windscreen and Paramount front panel. Yet strange as this hybrid sounds, it looks well and is as balanced a design as anything produced by the Scarborough concern itself.

In reality, what is on view is a 1977 Leopard PSU3 whose Plaxton Supreme body was rebuilt by M&H Coachworks of Leeds to the requirements of the Dewsbury operator Stanley Gath in 1984. This radical change was completed with a cherished number replacing original registration SNM 79R.

Following a decade or so of operation under the Stanley Gath banner, the Leopard received Glenway fleet

names whilst retaining its colours of grey and ivory, the Glenway of Ripponden business having been acquired by Gath some years earlier. It was in this form in April 1987 when shot in the Yorkshire town of Holmfirth, a place made famous by the *Last of the Summer Wine* television series. By a strange coincidence, behind the coach can be seen a Renault Commando truck of Ripponden Motors, formerly Ripponden & District Motors Ltd, a company that also ran coaches until its sale to Hebble in 1957.

The Leyland Tiger-badged Leopard of Stanley Gath, with an unusual Plaxton body.
MIKE FENTON



Recently re-issued was the **Coventry City Centre** map from Centro (tel: 0121 200 2700). From FWT it shows every stop lettered and all roads named and the reverse lists every service in numerical order showing which stops each uses. This is in addition to the all-Coventry map and is to the usual high standard one now expects from this PTE.

Suffolk is the first county to re-issue its map to reflect the recent Rural Bus Grant changes. Most others cannot justify a re-issue, having published earlier in the year, but for Suffolk this is the first map for a couple of years (tel: 0645 583358). From Pindar routes are shown green with black numbers for services operating at least five days a week and brown with red numbers for those less frequent.

The background is shaded to indicate the terrain covered by each of its seven timetable books, my only criticism being that the shading is rather too dense, and whilst not obscuring the detail, makes the map look rather muddy. The lower part has a frequency-chart showing days of operation and the frequency during the day, evenings, and Sundays (though using the word 'weekdays' to indicate daytime-only seems odd). The books in which each appears is added, as is an operator list. The rear contains excellent blow-ups of Beccles, Brandon, Bungay, Bury St Edmunds, Felixstowe, Framlingham, Hadleigh, Haverhill, Ipswich, Lowestoft, Mildenhall, Newmarket, Saxmundham, Stowmarket, Sudbury and Woodbridge with an additional one for Ipswich town centre. All roads are named and the same green/brown colours used. A separate map of the Sunday network is shown. A most welcome publication.

Next for two maps of **Swindon**. The first appears as an insert in the joint Thamesdown

and Swindon & District book (sold for 30p; tel: 01793 428428/522243) and is for their services only, and the second as a map from the new Swindon unitary authority (tel: 01793 466214).

The operator version seems an in-house production and is multi-colour, but as on only one road are there more than four together, it is clear. Roads served by buses are named and the background shows the four fares zones. There is no nasty blank town centre box so common on this type of map, instead the centre merely shows black roads, and a blow-up on the back gives full details with all roads named and numbers alongside each. Plans of the bus station and West Swindon shopping complex are added.

serves each one. I used it to attempt to deduce which services called at the railway station, only to find out later I was wrong. The authority map lacks sufficient detail despite its larger size and therefore a partial failure.

A **Green Line** map dated 1998/99 is available (tel: 0181 668 7261). Frankly, one wonders what the purpose of Green Line now is. From LDT Print, routes are coloured green for Green Line's own and 'associated services', blue for airport services and red for 'others' but not a clue is given as to what Green Line is and I certainly cannot work out why the others are there! The handful of 7XX series routes are obvious — the tiny remnant of a once-great empire — as are the newer ex-Invictaway 9XX series and links with Bracknell and Southend,

but why are routes like Whippet's to Huntingdon shown if the map admits they are neither Green Line nor 'associated'?

Perhaps it doesn't matter too much seeing the map is highly misleading! Non-

London services like Oxford to Stansted Airport are shown, yet an inset which shows 'major airport services' omits Oxford-Stansted! It also looks as though there are Ipswich-Brighton and Oxford-Norwich through services, so poorly are routes distinguished.

I am told an 'associated' service is merely one that has a right to stop at the Buckingham Palace Road stops, hence the once-daily coach to Portland with its twice-weekly feeder to Bridport appears — but has this much relevance? What would have been useful is a map of London showing which other stops these services use, but as it is, on a Green Line map of all things, London appears as a solid green box! This has to be the least-useful map in existence.

ON THE MAP

BARRY S DOE C.Math, MIMA, MCIT

The authority map is from FWT and shows all roads, with reversed-out names where bus routes, and with black, red or green numbers according to frequency. An index is added, including for destinations served outside the area. The reverse shows a smaller-scale map of country area services, a rail network map, insets for Chiseldon, Highworth and Wroughton (which are just off the main map), a frequency-chart, a blow-up of West Swindon, stops in the bus station and a map of town centre bus stops.

With all that, together with its being non-multi-colour, readers will guess I will think the latter a better map. Wrong! Exact detail of routes taken in the centre can only be found from the operator's blow-up, whereas the authority's version shows only bus stops, not which route

**SPECIAL
READER
OFFER**

Following the success of our limited edition reprint of *Buses Illustrated* No 1, Ian Allan Publishing Ltd will be reprinting, on a quarterly basis over the next three years, the remaining issues of *Buses Illustrated* Nos 2-12.

The early 1950s were very much a golden age of British buses, and it is therefore not surprising that this was the time *Buses Illustrated* was also getting into its stride.

Edited by one of the best-known transport experts of this time, Charles S. Dunbar, these early issues of *Buses Illustrated* are highly collectable and have long been out of print. During the course of 1999 we intend to reprint issues Nos 6-9. Issue No 6 was first published in June 1950, No 7 in July 1950, No 8 in October 1950 and No 9 in January 1952.

Ian Allan
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BFILL05

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FARES UP AGAIN

Every autumn we go through the same ritual. London Transport announces its fares increase for the following New Year, giving us the good news; this year it's that Carnet fares give greater savings (that's because they've stayed the same and everything else has gone up), that some child fares have come down and others haven't gone up. A little further down the press release we learn that the average fare increase is 4.5%. Then the *Evening Standard* takes the highest fare increase it can find (the short hop bus fare which goes up from 60p to 70p) and screams out that LT is whacking up fares by 16.7%.

There aren't huge changes in fares on the buses; in addition to the short hop the Central Zone one-zone fare goes up from 90p to £1, which is quite a lot but at least reduces the need to give change, while perhaps most surprising is that the fare for rides crossing from Zone 3 to Zone 4 actually drop from an already reasonable 90p to 80p.

But can it really make sense, in this new era of trying to promote the use of public transport, to continue this round of fares increases above the rate of inflation every year?

LONDON UNITED SUCCESS AT HOUNSLOW

London United has retained the contracts for operating six routes in the Hounslow area for a further five years from March 1999. All the contracts specify low-floor buses, double-deckers for route H32 (Hounslow-Southall) and single-deckers for the others. The H32 has a peak requirement of 11 buses and is at present worked by Metrobuses.

The other routes are H22 (Richmond-Twickenham-Hounslow), H23 (Stanwell Moor-Hounslow), H37 (Richmond-Isleworth-Hounslow), H91 (Hounslow-Hammersmith) and H98 (Hounslow-Hayes End). The H91 has a peak requirement of nine buses and these will be vehicles from the present fleet. Peak requirements for the other routes, which will receive new low-floor single-deckers, are 11 for the H22, four for the H23, 13 for the H37 and 13 for the H98. With new buses already in for the 281 and R70, and new ones to come for the Surrey 555 services, London United will soon have a very young fleet.

RAIL REPLACEMENT

A very smart blue and yellow double-decker passed me the other Sunday. On the side was the bold fleetname Aylesbury & the Vale, while a neat little display in the front windscreen read 'Underground: all stations to Richmond'. Aylesbury is quite a way from Richmond or the District line of the London Underground, which goes to show just how short-staffed London-area bus and coach operators are.

For the bus was, of course, on a rail-replacement service. This one is of more than passing interest as it is longer running than most. It began on the weekend of 24 October and runs for six weekends, before a break until after the New Year. It then resumes for a further five weekends in January and February.

The service runs between Richmond, Kew Gardens, Gunnersbury and Turnham Green stations and is masterminded by Metroline, which itself provides about two-thirds of the double-deckers required: 24 on Saturdays and 22 on Sundays. Some of the Saturday sub-contractors do not work on Sundays, and vice versa, and the same operators will not necessarily appear each weekend.

But the first weekend saw the Aylesbury depot of Arriva The Shires providing buses on both days, with other buses from Hemel Hempstead and Garston garages.

Wycombe Bus provided vehicles on the Sunday as did White Rose Transport of Staines and Classic Coaches. Blue Triangle was well-represented on the Sunday, with its vehicles including one Metrobus recently acquired from London United which was still in that operator's colours.

Saturday's sub-contractors included a new name to me, Sullivan Bus of Watford (with a Titan), and Mullaney's Star Line of Watford. I particularly liked the Bristol VR on the service with lettering on the sides offering a link between the ferry and the railway station.

To show that it's not only the bus side of transport that is complicated these days, I mention also that Metroline is contracted for this work by LT Buses, which is doing so on behalf of London Underground. But the actual work on the tracks is by Railtrack, owner of the section of line in question.

If you think that this particular operation is quite impressive - which it is - I would just mention that back in the Summer on a couple of non-consecutive weekends replacement of part of the Jubilee and Metropolitan Underground lines saw London Traveller providing six double-deckers and controlling an operation which used also buses from 18 other operators.

IN ROMFORD

It is probably the density of the bus services in and around Romford that have given the town so many bus garages over the years. In the old days there was the Green Line garage (code RE) which worked the short-distance routes into Aldgate, and the central bus Hornchurch garage (code RD), which was actually in Hornchurch Road, Romford, but named differently to avoid confusion with the Green Line garage. Then in 1953 a new garage opened at North Street, Romford (code NS) to relieve the overcrowded RD garage.

Things have changed a lot since then, though North Street, Romford, garage is still in use with Stagecoach East London. Now another garage has opened. This time, the operator is First Thamesway. In true local tradition perhaps, this garage is actually at Harold Wood, near Gallows Corner. Buses previously outstationed at Brentwood, plus some from Basildon and others from Ponders End are all based there.

The remaining, and larger, operations at Ponders End involving some 50 buses have changed to First Capital. Most of the buses are Mercedes-Benz minibuses (of four different types), plus 14 Dennis Darts, which work some ten different routes. All the drivers involved are still employed by First Thamesway, and the buses are officially on long-term loan.

Because of staff shortages route 193 (a local Romford-Hornchurch service) has not moved from Ponders End as planned to the new Harold Wood garage, and a group of mobility bus routes run for LT by Thamesway has so far stayed at its Basildon depot.

Meanwhile one of our spies recently spotted a Thamesway Dart running into Heathrow on London Buslines' 285 from Kingston. Apparently it had a large notice on the windscreen saying it wasn't to be fuelled, so its arrival 30-odd miles from home was all the more remarkable. Mind you, I suppose that's nothing; another of our spies spotted a red Metrobus of one of the Arriva London companies working a school contract in Greenock recently!



Frank E. Thorpe started operation of route 210 (Brent Cross-Finsbury Park) on 26 September, using 12 new dual-door Plaxton Pointer 2-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs. DLF39 (S539 JLM) is seen at Brent Cross on the first day.
GEOFF RIXON



Another route to have had new buses recently is the 16, Victoria-Cricklewood. Metroline runs the route and the new buses are Alexander-bodied Volvo Olympians, one of which is AV28 (S128 RLE).
GEOFF RIXON

DEAD LONG TRUNDLES

The temporary timetable for route 60 (Old Coulsdon-Streatham Common) with a 15-minute frequency has now been replaced by the intended 12-minute frequency. The bulk of the service is still provided by Stagecoach Selkent but Blue Triangle of Rainham provides four buses on Mondays to Saturdays. Those taking up operations at the Streatham end of the route travel via central London, while those starting at Old Coulsdon travel via the Dartford Tunnel and the M25. The route is officially operated by Capital Logistics, whose name appears on the published timetable.

Ironically it is Capital Logistics which probably qualifies for operation of another epic dead-mileage positioning run. It uses the Bexley Council depot at Crayford for garaging some buses on route 726 (Dartford-Bexley-Bromley-Croydon-Kingston-Heathrow). The route is due to be cut back to Bromley from January. But meanwhile there are apparently quite regular vehicle positioning workings in the night from the operator's West Drayton depot to Dartford, via the M25.

IN BRIEF

Route ELS, the last remaining of the three replacement routes for the East London Underground line, finished in late September, following the resumption of the train service over the final part of the line. The ELS was operated by Stagecoach East London, and until recently used orange-liveried Optare StarRiders.

London United is this year running Kingston park-&-ride route K50 (Chessington-Kingston). It began on 2 November, is operated by double-deckers, and is sponsored by the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and Chessington World of Adventures.

Following the closure of the Rotherhithe Tunnel for 'about two months' from 2 November, route P14 (Surrey Quays-Isle of Dogs) has been diverted via Tower Bridge.

After re-engining one Iveco-engined RML with a Cummins unit and fitting a Scania in another Stagecoach East London is to use Scania in several more RMLs.

Capital Transport



The 1960s saw radical changes in the way that London Transport's bus services were operated. At the beginning of the period under review, Routemasters were seen as providing almost all future vehicle requirements, their first task of replacing the Capital's trolleybus fleet having got under way. However, within a few years of the type starting to replace the RT family, wholesale one-man operation became the future vision and

outside factors dictated the purchase of bus designs that were creating serious problems by the end of the decade. All aspects of London bus history during these ten years are covered in this new book by Ken Glazier.

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MILLAR'S *Tales*

ALAN MILLAR'S MONTHLY COLUMN OF
MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

Whatever happened to...? ...Volvo and Carrus Oy

Twelve months ago, we relayed news of the Volvo Bus Corporation buying Carrus Oy, the Finnish bodybuilder best known by its three factories' brand names of Ajokki, Delta and Wiima. Carrus was credited with turning out 452 bodies in 1996, 60% on Volvo chassis.

Surely, you might ask, this move had no relevance in the UK where Volvo had pulled out of bodybuilding and had close working relationships with independent bodybuilders Plaxton, Alexander and Wright? Or did it?

Tailfins may be out of automotive fashion, but I rather fancy that Finnish tales aren't be ignored, for events at Carrus Oy show how rapidly things are developing in bus manufacturing. In the same restructuring exercise that ends Volvo bus assembly in Britain, Germany and Austria, at least some of Wiima's production is moving to Volvo's Polish plant in Wroclaw to satisfy ambitions in Eastern and Southern Europe.

The B7L-based 7000 integral city bus described in last month's issue is a Carrus Wiima design offered as a complete product to counter competition from the likes of Mercedes-Benz or Iveco/Renault.

As a right-hand-drive market as yet unsold on the supposed benefits of Continental crush-loaders, Britain may be a less obvious target for that particular complete vehicle — unless, as seems likely, Mercedes et al start making inroads with their mass-produced citybuses.

And Carrus designs might — just possibly — have also been brought closer by fast-changing developments here. The Alexander relationship has become, to say the least, interesting now that its Falkirk and Mallusk factories are in common ownership with Dennis, while Henlys' failed moves to buy Dennis have left Plaxton's owner 10% owned by Volvo.

IMITATION EST LE PLUS SINCÈRE GENRE DE FLATTERIE

Thirty years after it first appeared, the fame of Wallace Arnold's WA logo continues to spread far and wide. So, while holidaying this past summer near St Cyr in southern France, I wasn't surprised to see the familiar shape on the cream-painted side of a Berkhof-bodied Volvo until I realised that this Wally Trolley was

more chariot de Valli and almost certainly had never seen the inside of Geldard Road, Leeds. For one thing, you don't see the genuine article with such fanciful skyscape designs on the side and Wally's Trolley-painters know the difference between the 22nd and 23rd letters of the alphabet.



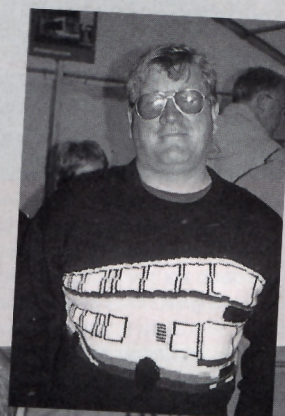
THROW AWAY THE ANORAK, THE KNITTED BUS IS HERE

The October issue was barely unwrapped and on sale on the nation's magazine shelves, complete with my revelation that Mrs M had taken to referring affectionately to Stagecoach as 'Mrs Gloag's Wee Knitting Buses', before I first sighted one of Mrs G's Wee Knitted buses.

Fed up perhaps with all those jibes about anoraks, Debra Ripper from Lowestoft has taken to knitting bus pullovers for her husband Philip and they were both delighted to display her latest creation at the Showbus rally in September. With admirable skill and patience, she has decorated this one not only with one of Mrs G and her younger brother's buses, but also one of Mr G. Hodgson's and a far from wee one of

Messrs Lockhead and Smallwood — in other words, Stagecoach and Arriva on the back and a FirstGroup double-decker on the front.

She was hoping to add logos and fleetnames when they returned home and says she's already knitted and purled something similar in Eastern Counties livery.



Philip Ripper models his wife Debra's excellent handiwork at Showbus.

CHERISHED ON A PLATE

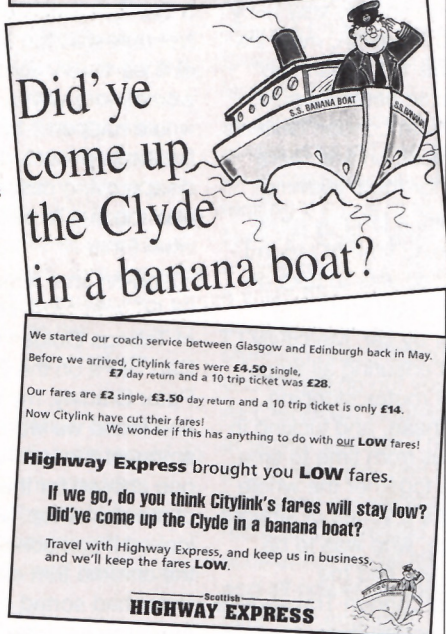
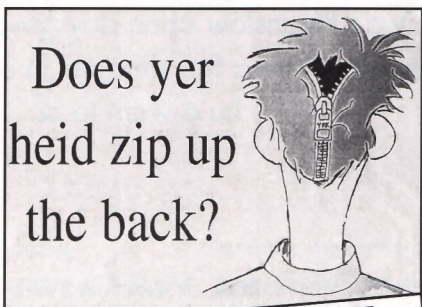
While he assures me that his piggy bank won't yield the pennies demanded for the sale of cherished registration number BUS 1 (last month's Tales), I rather suspect the editor wishes it did. For I met him beside a retailer's van at Showbus, gazing longingly at the number plate. Rumour has it that he's prepared to rename the magazine 'B11 SES'.



FUNTIME FOR TIMETABLES?

A letter from Neil Renilson, chief pattern designer for most of Scotland's Wee Knitting Buses, suggests it's time this column encouraged the industry to put more fun and less clinical tedium into its publicity material.

Let's have more. Whether you're an operator or an all-important passenger, please send in examples from around the land where the industry lightens itself up to attract new business.



None-too-serious publicity for Scottish Highway Express, recently taken over by Stagecoach.

CONFUCIUS HE SAY: 'DON'T WAIT IN UXBRIDGE'

Perhaps this bus stop in Belmont Road, Uxbridge is London Transport Buses' move into fun publicity. Or maybe a prankster has been having a ball. Whatever the reason, reader Graham Smith reckons the edifice's identity crisis stands every chance of sending deeply confused people into a Home Counties black hole.

It's hard to know where to start with what looks like a professional piece of public transport infrastructure. But Stansted airport seems as good as any. Not only is London's third airport mis-spelt, but route 724 stopped going there two-and-a-half years ago and, in any case, the timetables and the bit saying '724' claim correctly that the stop is for coaches heading from Stansted to Heathrow. The stop across the road for northbound coaches, he tells me, also details only southbound journeys.

And the confusion goes further. Or rather it doesn't, as Oxford-bound coaches no longer call at this stop. Apparently the location point was relettered from 'G' to 'E' after this photograph was taken, but the blatant errors went uncorrected.



SORRY, MY BUS GOT LOST . . .

Forget those excuses about your bus turning up late or breaking down. I can cap them with personal experience of a bus that got lost.

This, I promise, is true. Having enrolled on to a series of university evening lectures, I chose to use the direct bus from the end of our street to the lecture theatre doors. Even allowing for what sadly passes as an acceptable evening frequency on a late-20th century urban bus route, the timings suit and I needn't trouble about parking. If the bus doesn't get lost.

On the first evening, First Glasgow punctually delivered an Ailsa to my stop. Off it screamed, following a route substantially unaltered since Edwardians laid it out with tram rails. Only trams don't miss turnings that are optional for inexperienced Ailsa drivers. Deep in Victorian south Glasgow, I began to sense we had slipped out of orbit. A couple of old ladies downstairs were airing the same suspicions. So, alarmingly, was the driver who confessed he hadn't driven this route before and didn't know how he had gone wrong.

Mercifully, the beneficent St Moir of Lockhead, patron saint of Glasgow buses, protected us as the driver imagined the old ladies were helping him reverse across a potentially busy junction while they — who surely hadn't a clue about driving anything, let alone reversing 10 metres of dimly lit double-decker — thought they were telling him he needed to do a 360° turn to get back on route. He drove off confidently again, but in entirely the wrong direction, and as the good ladies urged him to attempt a three point turn in what looked like someone's driveway, I felt compelled to step in with a simpler solution to getting back on route without selecting reverse gear.

The entertainment continued later, as there was a change of drivers and a boarding passenger found himself being roped in to adjust the new driver's nearside mirror (you try doing it yourself in a bus with only an offside cab door). Why trouble with route learning or vehicle preparation when passengers pay £1.10 for travel with audience participation?

. . . AND I FOUND ANOTHER

Such excitement hasn't stopped me using the bus service, but other reasons favoured driving the following Tuesday. On my way home I was reminded not to believe everything I read — or write — in these pages. Contrary to what I'd been told by people in the know, and to my article last month, First Glasgow's last Atlantean hadn't been withdrawn. Around 9.45pm on 21 October, I passed an orange one on a cross-city service to a western suburb. I shan't trouble you again with such detail, but want you to know that I know these veterans are still defying history.

20 YEARS AGO

Before 1978, the Society of Motor Manufacturers & Traders organised two motor shows at London's Earls Court — a car show every October and a commercial vehicle event late-September every other year. Then someone hit on the fun idea of having a biennial combined car and commercial show at the brand new National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham.

The first attracted around 900,000 visitors over nine days. I can recite those figures because I've just read then editor John Parke's report in December 1978 *Buses*. But I could have guessed them as I was among the 900,000 and remember the crowd control nightmare.

Tom Moore's 1978 pictures showed some of the 250 West Midlands buses that shifted the hordes between car parks and exhibition halls — a journey I didn't experience, but I recall waiting in vain at prearranged indoor spots for contacts marooned outside. And that's not selective memory, for John Parke wrote that 'chances were few and far between of serious discussion with existing or possible customers'.

What a shame, for this was the show when Leyland unveiled its first stab at the National 2 and (as now) articulated buses were a novelty. Things got better in 1980, but combined shows didn't work. Buses last appeared in 1988, by which time the industry had its own separate show, and trucks pulled out after 1990.

ROUTEMAS

London United's Hounslow open day gave **STEPHEN MORRIS** the chance to drive a Routemaster in service. He's not sure he'd want to do it all the time, though

The garage open day held by London United at Hounslow has become something of an annual event now, well-attended by local folk and enthusiasts alike. One feature of it is the use of Routemasters over routes normally one-person operated, which is no mean feat as Hounslow no longer has Routemasters! It therefore has to borrow them from one of London United's other garages, Shepherds Bush, whose manager is none other than well-known London bus enthusiast Steve Fennell.

This year it was decided that route 110, Hounslow-Twickenham, should be run exclusively by Routemasters, and in addition to some from Shepherds Bush, Routemasters also popped up from other parts of London altogether. Routemaster operation on the 110 was well-publicised, but a little surprise was that one Routemaster would also appear on route 111, Heathrow-Hounslow-Kingston, to be crewed by guest crews. That for the morning comprised Peter Bradley of London Transport Buses' Tendered Bus Unit as conductor and a rank outsider at the sharp end, to whitt the editor of *Buses*.

Newly-repainted RML2739 on the 111 in Bath Road at Cranford, being driven by the editor on 3 October, the day of Hounslow Garage's open day.
RUSSELL YOUNG

Route 111

On the surface a resident of the west side of London should be able to find his way fairly easily from Heathrow to Kingston, even via Hounslow. In practice the 111 doesn't go quite the way any sensible person would. The invitation to drive, from London United's John Lamphier, came latish on and there was precious little time for route learning.

The 111 is actually quite a lengthy route with an end-to-end running time of around 80min; the only thing to do was to take an extended lunch hour one day and try to piece the route together by car. Mercifully LT is most particular about ensuring all stops carry the numbers of all routes stopping there and by following these, and tucking in behind the odd Metrobus from time to time, it was possible to piece together the whole thing. 'Just remember it's a series of straight lines!', Malcolm Claridge, who was to be route controller for the day, told me reassuringly. To say that London Transport is an entirely alcohol-free undertaking, some people have a very funny idea of straight lines, and I can only imagine that route 111 was planned by someone at LT in their lunch hour, and a piece of stray spaghetti must have landed on the Hampton bit of the map at the critical moment. The route even finds itself running along a real, live Acacia Road at one point! Previously I had imagined such things to be quite apocryphal.

On the road with a Routemaster

It was thus that I awoke early on Saturday 3 October with a great sense of foreboding. Not only was the 111 highly obscure, parts of it were very tight in a Peugeot 405; how would I fare with a Routemaster, and what would happen if I took a wrong turn and finished up stuck down a cul-de-sac with 73 disapproving passengers aboard? Still, it was too late to back out now, if you see what I mean.

Sign-on time was a very respectable 08.56, and I arrived in plenty of time on one of Tellings Golden Miller's very smart Dennis Dart SLFs on the 235 from Sunbury. I met Peter Bradley, my conductor for the morning, and found we were allocated to RML2739, amongst the last Routemasters built and one chosen for the fact it had just come out of the paintshop. Very nice it would have looked if someone had thought to replace the chrome trim on the radiator. By the time Peter had sorted out his Gibson ticket machine and I had looked the bus over and discovered how surprisingly limited is the adjustment in the driver's seat it was virtually 09.00, and we were due to be in service from Heathrow at 09.12. We were going to



TER DRIVER FOR A DAY

have to hurry if we were to make it.

Three things conspired against us being at Heathrow in time to pick up service. One was that every set of traffic lights between Hounslow and the airport decided to go red just at that point where it would have been indecent to keep going. The second was that on this particular Routemaster, simply sitting there with the footbrake on for any length of time meant that the little flag saying 'STOP', which tells you you have run out of brake pressure, dropped down, and precious minutes were lost as I built up pressure again. Thereafter I resorted to the handbrake, which I suppose is what you should do anyway.

The third factor was that RML2739 was very much the stately old lady, who would do things at her own speed thank you very much, and if you expected her to behave like one of those little whippersnapper Dennis Darts, then you jolly well had another think coming.

Routemasters are ingenious buses, and one of their ingenious features is a gearbox which can be controlled automatically or manually using the same control. Put the gear selector in the fourth gear position, and it works in fully-automatic mode, or you can select all gears manually. A lot of modern cars, those which are posh that is, have a 'sport' mode and an 'economy' mode. Routemasters have one mode, 'downright miserly', which starts the bus in second, lets the revs climb to a stunning 850rpm or so before selecting third, and reaching top at something slightly above walking pace. It doesn't matter how hard you press the accelerator, the 0-30 time (0-60 doesn't exist, except in km/h) is best measured with a calendar. Using the gears manually means you can use more revs, and gives you the ability to start in first. However this has little advantage; if you start in first it takes so long for the revs to drop sufficiently to change up to second that the bus is nearly at a standstill again. Use of those extra revs gives a little more performance, though not as much as you might think.

Today's Routemaster is quite different from that built 30 years ago or more. Interior refurbishing has given the inside a much brighter look, more in tune with today's buses. Externally it now boasts unheard-of

luxuries, like two brake lights and headlights that both light up at the same time. Mechanically of course they are greatly changed; RML2379 now boasts a Cummins C-series engine, specially derated and lacking the usual turbocharger. Starting it is no longer a case of yanking a coat hook above your left ear; firstly you have to insert an immobiliser key, which stops kids from nicking the bus, and then turn a Leyland National-style starter switch. The Cummins engine gives it a very different sound from the old AEC, and if RML2379 was slow to accelerate at least it would romp along at a stunning nearly 40mph without deafening you or rattling out your fillings, as the one AEC-engined Routemaster I once drove did at similar speeds. The other little refinement is a throttle dip, and it was disconcerting at first when accelerating away in automatic mode to be greeted by a little 'phut' as the accelerator pedal fell away from your foot and all power disappeared until the next gear was engaged. This contributed to the slow acceleration.

So arrival at Heathrow was a good few minutes after due departure time and it was going to take some doing to get back on schedule. We never managed it for the rest of the shift.

Into service

The first thing I learned on taking up service was that LT route tendering has led to great rivalry between operators. Gone are the days when bus drivers would help each other out. Leaving Heathrow bus station is a tricky affair; the exit lane puts you in the outside lane of four busy lanes of traffic, and the 111, in common with most other local routes, needs to be in the inside lane. Moreover there is a set of lights just after you leave the bus station, and I cleverly straddled lanes four and three by stopping at 45° to the direction of traffic. When the lights changed, I discovered a London Buslines bus had even more cleverly got into lane 2, preventing me from moving, while a London & Country one had gained the best position of all, in lane 1, where it could stop London Buslines getting over into the left, the two of them between them leaving me stranded.

I resolved to be more ambitious on my next trip, and after much brinkmanship our

three buses sorted themselves out into the nearside lane to leave the airport central area by the tunnel. The problem is, visibility obliquely towards the rear nearside of a Routemaster is not good and it's quite easy not to see Dennis Darts trying to shut you out, even if one's bright yellow and the other is lime green.

Thereafter life was rather simpler. London United Metrobus drivers on the 111 were extremely kind in letting me through gaps between parked cars whenever I met them coming the other way; no doubt they had been warned that if they saw an idiot coming towards them in a Routemaster it was in their own best interests to keep out of his way.

A steep learning curve

It's amazing the things you learn when driving a Routemaster in service. One is that Routemaster power steering isn't all it's cracked up to be. RML2739 was very heavy indeed to drive; one Metrobus driver coming the other way was in hysterics watching me wrestle the thing round a mini roundabout. The other is that the closer a car is built to Bavaria, the less likely it is to let you out of bus stops. I was pleasantly surprised (as I had been on a previous occasion when London United let me moonlight for a day on its 555 route following my article on that service in *Buses* April) by most car drivers' willingness to let me pull out. But you could almost guarantee that the car that comes screaming past you from nowhere just as you have started to pull out will be a BMW. The only exception to prove the rule was an Alfa Romeo.

Opposite above:

The entire 110 service was run by Routemasters on 3 October; Stagecoach East London RML2550 was one of those borrowed for the service and is standing at Hounslow bus station.

STEPHEN MORRIS

Opposite below:

London United's specially-liveried ER880 also saw service on the 11 later in the day; here it is just leaving Hounslow garage to take up service; across the road is a more typical 111 bus, a Metrobus.

STEPHEN MORRIS

The other rule of bus driving is that whenever you find a tricky patch of road, there will be a cyclist in the worst possible place. On this particular Saturday morning every cyclist in West London had turned out just to inspect my nearside front wheel in minute detail.

Passenger reactions

It was the first time for many years a Routemaster had worked on most parts of the route. On a Saturday Heathrow isn't a significant traffic objective for the 111; most of the traffic was shoppers going either into Hounslow or into Kingston, and there were plenty of them. We never quite got a three-bell load, but we came close a number of times. Passengers reacted to the Routemaster in various different ways. 'You could tell the ones who worked in London', Peter Bradley remarked afterwards; they were the ones who boarded and sat down without batting an eyelid. More often than not, I found myself having to wait for ages at stops; Peter was having difficulty persuading passengers that they could sit down and he would come for their fares, and that they didn't have to pay as they entered.

Elderly ladies in particular seemed to appreciate the return of a traditional bus and a conductor. Several passengers, mainly in their twenties and thirties, maybe just too young to remember crew-operated buses clearly, came running up to the front, at first looking annoyed that I hadn't stopped with the front of the bus opposite the stop and then looking bemused, trying to work out if they were expected somehow to climb up on to the bonnet to board the bus. But it all

seemed worth it when two little girls waiting at Heston to go shopping in Hounslow with their Mum jumped up and down with unbridled glee when the RML pulled up at their stop. It had made their day, if nobody else's.

From the cab you have little contact with the passengers at all, and I was rather surprised that there is no cab mirror. All Manchester's halfcab buses had such a thing, and I'm sure many others did; without one you are entirely dependent on the conductor's signals for knowing what is going on. That was fine, until one alighting passenger thought the bell rope was to hang on to, and inadvertently gave me a starting signal before she had managed to get off. Luckily the ponderous acceleration worked in our favour on that occasion and a five bell emergency stop signal pulled me up quickly.

Luckily we never did get lost or stuck up a cul de sac, but we never got back to time either. Car traffic trying to get across Kingston Bridge was quite unbelievable and delayed us considerably; there are some bus lanes but they're by no means long enough. Thus all recovery time was used up and the five-and-a-half hour shift had to be completed without any break whatsoever. The Routemaster coped without batting an eyelid, but seemed to get heavier and heavier, and I was quite thankful when I was able to hand over to Jon Bachelor, Stagecoach East London's Bow garage operating manager, at Hounslow on our second round trip. He didn't seem quite sure of the route either. 'Oh it's easy', I said airily; 'it's just a series of straight lines really'. The thunderbolt missed me by inches and I never did find out whether Jon ever got back; by then I was stuck in Hounslow's traffic on another TGM Dart bound for Sunbury.

And a driver's reaction

What were my impressions of the Routemaster then? I shall be dismissed as a heretic by 90% of my readers if I concede it was anything less than perfect. As a new bus for 1958 it would have been stunning. This 1968 bus on an F-plate must have seemed fairly archaic even when new. It had its good points, not least of which was that the 111 is such a convoluted route, and a very busy one at that, and I was very glad I wasn't having to collect fares and be nice to passengers.

The cab, though dated, is superbly set out. That gear selector is particularly good, and it's nice to have the choice of selecting the gears yourself or, when the going gets tough, just leaving it in automatic and letting the bus sort things out for itself. The handbrake is on the left, giving excellent cab access, and is situated in just the right place to reach and apply with the minimum of effort. Steering had loads of 'feel', which is a polite way of saying it was jolly heavy. It would have been nicer too if the windscreen had been set a little higher, as my eyeline was slightly higher than the top of the windscreen. On occasions traffic lights would disappear out of view altogether. Acceleration was ponderous at best, but brakes were first rate. And despite 30 years' hard labour there wasn't a rattle or a squeak to be heard.

No, the Routemaster is a masterpiece of good industrial design — but I don't know that I'd really want to drive one all day every day.

Hounslow garage was cleared of its usual occupants for the day and a display was put on of current rolling stock and preserved vehicles.

STEPHEN MORRIS



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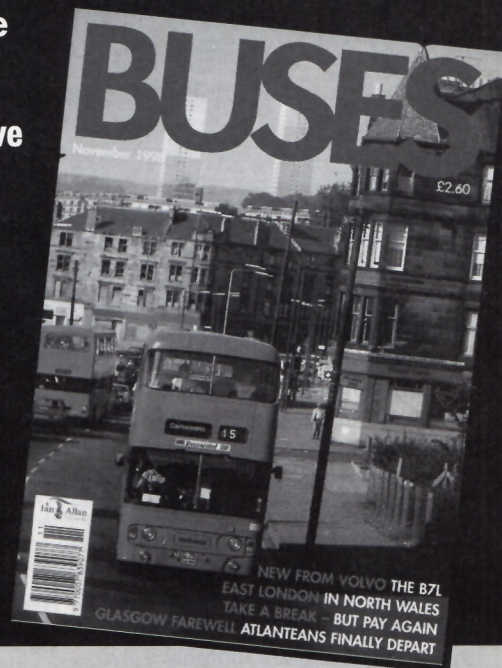
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STEPHEN MORRIS and PHILIP LAMB report on all that was new at Expo Coach 98 at Birmingham

While Coach & Bus remains the premier show for the bus and coach trade, Expo Coach, held on the years when there isn't a Coach & Bus, is beginning to give it a run for its money. Nowadays it's held, like Coach & Bus, at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham, though as its name suggests it is predominantly a coach show still. That's not to say there weren't one or two buses there this year.

It's remarkable too in an industry the size of the bus and coach industry, that manufacturers can turn out something new not just every other year, but every year. There was plenty to be seen for the first time at Expo Coach this year, and those major players, notably Volvo, Dennis and Plaxton, which chose to stay away missed a trick.

A little Dart

Nonetheless, maybe the most important newcomer on the bus side was a new 8.5m low-floor Dennis Dart. Over the years the Dart has got bigger and bigger; conceived originally as a step up from a minibus, it soon spawned larger versions. The ultimate has been the Super Pointer Dart, SPD, as big as a long Leyland National at 11.3m. Now Dennis has

announced that a little one is to be available again, in conjunction with Plaxton, the 8.5m MPD — Mini Pointer Dart. So it was somewhat surprising that the first showing of Dennis's new baby Dart should be by Marshall.

We understand that the chassis is the second 8.5m low-floor Dart to be built, though it's perhaps ironic that it has turned out at 8.9m with the Marshall body, not a lot smaller than a 9m Dart! It may be thought that an 8.9m Marshall-bodied Dennis Dart will kill off the Marshall

Minibus, but Marshall insists the Minibus remains in production. It has now delivered the first batch of Minibus 2s to CentreWest, and the Dart also carries CentreWest fleetnames though unusually for this London operator it is in full FirstGroup corporate livery. No doubt it will visit other FirstGroup operators, though CentreWest is the Marshall 'fan' amongst them.

Though the Minibus remains in production, the Dart offers obvious advantages, such as the six-cylinder



Above right:

Dennis has launched a new short, 8.5m version of the Dart SLF. Though to be offered in conjunction with Plaxton as the MPD, the first to appear is this First CentreWest one with Marshall bodywork. It gives an obvious alternative to the Marshall minibus, though Marshall intends to persevere with its integral.

Right:

One of the newcomers at Expo Coach 98 was the Ayats Atlas integral. Other Ayats shown were Bravo double- and one-and-a-half-deckers.



COACH98

Cummins B-series, which is not only more powerful than the four-cylinder version in the Minibus but is also much quieter and smoother. Also the Dart, of which well over 6,000 have now been built, is rather more tried, tested and accepted.

The Marshall body on show featured Multiplex wiring, something which Marshall is trying to promote, although we understand the CentreWest Dart is only the third Marshall vehicle to feature it. As well as eliminating much of the wiring, it offers all sorts of electronic features. On this vehicle, if you leave it for 10 minutes without turning the interior lights off, it will start to turn them off one by one.

British Caetanos

The Marshall Dart wasn't the only Dart there. There was another for Glyn Williams, with a familiar-looking body with characteristic drooping windscreen line. This is no longer built by UVG, nor by WS Coachbuilders, nor even by Wadham Stringer. Nor has the rather awkward SCUK name remained; it is now unashamedly a Caetano, the Caetano Compass. Salvador Caetano, the famous Portuguese coachbuilder, is now completely in charge of the former Wadham Stringer factory at Waterloooville, and the Compass looks identical to the previous UVG body. We are assured however that looks are only skin deep, and under the skin it is built more to the quality standard for which Caetano has in recent years gained a reputation. Sadly UVG and its predecessors did not always achieve quite the same build quality.

The Compass is still built at Waterloooville, and so is the Cutlass, née the UVG S320. This low-cost coach has not yet reached its proper potential; its looks are distinctive and so long as no-one expects it to thrash up and down to the south of France it is quite an acceptable alternative for more modest work. It is still based on the Dennis Javelin, but now has a slightly restyled front end, not least to accommodate a new windscreen. The original S320 windscreen apparently gave more than a few problems. You pay a bit extra for the Caetano build quality, but the Cutlass is still eminently good value.

The Enigma, shown at Coach & Bus '97, was also on show. This is built in Portugal, and there are no plans to produce it at Waterloooville. Styling of this has been revised slightly too, and while it's still a good-looking coach, much depends on livery application. The first, shown last year, was, as its name suggests, enigmatically good looking in a very deep metallic red; paint it in predominantly light colours and it doesn't work so well.



Above & Below:
Possibly the star of the show was the magnificent Neoplan Starliner, which is now being offered on the UK market — at £251,000.



A Neoplan for the 21st century

There were several talking points of Expo Coach, but the star of the show was almost certainly the latest offering from Neoplan, its new Starliner model which, following its debut in Continental Europe, is now to be offered — for those who can afford it — in Britain. It's yours for a quarter of a million pounds. The operator who can afford it (of which Capital Logistics is one) will be rewarded by a coach which cannot fail to attract attention; Neoplan has never been renowned for restrained styling, and the styling of the Starliner is perhaps its most extreme yet.

The Starliner, which is a 12m single-decker, builds on the same styling ideas as the Skyliner, the double-decker which brought Neoplan to prominence in Britain in the early 1980s, but in a thoroughly late-1990s way; it is a fresh, ultra-modern design and yet one which, even at a quick glance, could not have come from any other builder but Neoplan. Its front end with multiple headlamps, the 'spats' half covering the twin rear wheels, its futuristic rear end, look like something out of *Thunderbirds*, and are sure to capture the imagination. Inside too the interior is like nothing else, with most imaginative fibre-optic lighting, looking like the set of an extravagant Broadway musical. Computerised displays for the driver look suitably baffling, but suit the atmosphere of this high-tech coach for the 21st century.

Coming back down to earth, the Starliner is powered by a hefty 381bhp twin-turbo Mercedes-Benz V8 engine driving through a ZF eight-speed gearbox.

Ayats makes a comeback

Talking of futuristic styling, the Spanish builder Ayats announced its return at Expo Coach. Ayats, like Neoplan, likes to make a design statement when it builds a coach and the new range being offered for the British market certainly looks different. Those with long memories may remember Ayats' previous foray into the British market with its Apollo and Diana models in the early-1980s. Its newly-formed dealership, Anglo-American Coach Industries, based at Eccles, near Manchester, maintains that the reason for the failure of those models to take off here were the unfamiliar chassis; Ayats was offered only on Magirus-Deutz chassis, an unknown quantity in the British market, complete with air-cooled engine.

Magirus-Deutz long since disappeared into the Iveco fold, and the new Ayats range is entirely integral. There are four models. One is the two-axle Atlas, which is a high-floor single-decker seating up to 53. This is one of the first vehicles for the

UK which takes advantage of the relaxation of gross vehicle weight on two axles to 18 tonnes from 1 January. The other three are variations of the Bravo, which is a three-axle coach. The standard Bravo is a 65-seat one-and-a-half-decker, the Bravo 1 is a full double-decker with 85 seats and the Bravo II is a super-high-floor single-decker, offering 55 seats, with the saloon floor continuing over the driving compartment, and a huge luggage capacity of 16.5cu m. Styling is futuristic, with huge swathes of glass swooping down in curves.

The Cummins M11 engine, rated at 380 or 405bhp is available for the British market, with other engine options including a range of Mercedes engines from 340 to 435bhp, three MAN engines, rated between 350 and 460bhp and a 428bhp DAF engine. Manual transmission is ZF, with an Allison automatic as a no-cost option. Indeed Anglo-American's philosophy is to offer as much as possible within the specified prices, which range from £175,000 for the Atlas to £245,000 for the Bravo 1. Air conditioning, remote-controlled power locker doors and a built-in vacuum cleaner system are all standard. Anglo-American expects to register up to 36 coaches next year in Britain, and the first ordered is a Bravo 1 79-seat double-decker for Sunfun Holidays of Cambridgeshire.

Cannon: not a big gun yet!

News for the UK automotive industry has not been good latterly, but there is a new UK manufacturer, of which you may not yet have heard. It's a small firm based in Strabane, Co Tyrone, by the name of Cannon, named after its chairman and founder William J. Cannon.

Cannon has spotted a gap in the market for simple, straightforward midibus and midicoach chassis and was showing its wares for the first time at Expo Coach. Already it has two separate chassis available. One is the Softline, which is aimed directly at the Mercedes Vario market. It's a front-engined chassis with the engine over the front axle, a straightforward bolted chassis frame and a Cummins B-series four-cylinder engine. This is rated at 133bhp and equates almost exactly to the Vario's 4.25litre 133bhp engine. A ZF five-speed manual gearbox is standard, though with the Allison AT542 automatic as an option. Brakes are air-over-hydraulic, with discs at the front, and suspension is by parabolic steel springs with hydraulic shock absorbers and anti-roll bars. Axles are from Albion, and two rear axle ratios are available, 3.31:1 to give a theoretical maximum speed of no less than 86mph for coach use, and 5.13:1 giving a more restrained speed of 55mph for bus work.

The other chassis, the Hiline, replaces the gap left by the demise of the Leyland Swift. This too uses a Cummins B-series engine, in this case the six-cylinder version mounted vertically under the floor and rated at 160 or even 180bhp. Again there is a choice of ZF (five- or six-speed) manual gearboxes or Allison automatic, and a Telma retarder is fitted.

Although the two chassis were shown under bodywork by Leicester Carriage Builders, other bodybuilders will be able to body the very straightforward chassis. The first two orders, for Hilines with LCB bodywork, have come from Pioneer, Jersey, where the type would appear eminently suited. They appear to be good, rugged, no-nonsense vehicles; low-floor they're not, but operators who can live without such political correctness will no doubt be attracted. As a service bus the Hiline in particular looks a very attractive proposition for rural work where something like a Dart SLF might be inappropriate.

Both had bodywork which showed, dare we say, perhaps rather more style than we have seen before from Leicester.

Getting heavy

1 January 1999 sees an increase in gross vehicle weight (GVW) permissible, up to the European standard of 18 tonnes on two axles. In addition to the two-axle Ayats Atlas, Iveco, which has been making great strides in the British coach market over the last year or so, also had an 18 tonner on show. Iveco's EuroRider has been gaining in acclaim, and a new version with Beulas bodywork, the 3.775m-high El Mundo, was at the NEC. This is a 51-seater and the extra weight allowance enables Iveco to offer this vehicle at 250mm higher than the Stergo, which it closely resembles, and giving an extra 2cu m of luggage. El Mundo uses a 350bhp Iveco 9.5 litre engine and an eight-speed ZF synchromesh gearbox. The first was shown at Expo Coach, along with a Stergo for Whitelaws of Stonehouse and a EuroMidi with Indcar Maxim 29-seat bodywork.

Amongst other vehicles there, Neoplan was showing its Transliner on an MAN chassis, with two for Coliseum Coaches. So far the Transliner has only been available on Dennis Javelin. Also new was a restyled body from Marco Polo, the Continental, with a much neater frontal appearance than previous models.

Expo Coach, while still the show for the smaller operator, has certainly come of age; maybe next time some of the larger players in the industry may feel they ought to be there too.



Left: Optare showed a Solo in Go Wear Buses livery, which suits the type well.

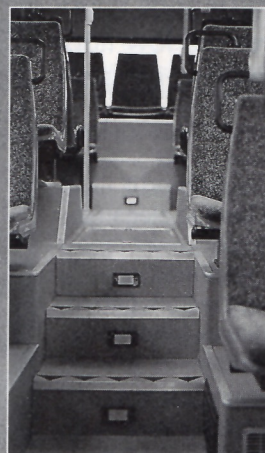


Above: New from Neoplan for next season is the Transliner on MAN chassis as an alternative to Dennis.



Left: Northern Ireland-based Cannon made its debut at Expo Coach. One of two products it is offering is the front-engined Softline chassis, with Leicester Carriage Builders' Nemesis bodywork.

Above: Not everybody wants or needs a sophisticated bus; offering a replacement for the Leyland Swift is Cannon's Hiline, which has a mid-mounted Cummins B-series engine. Bodywork on the first of two for Pioneer Coaches, Jersey, is the Leicester Carriage Builders Islander.



Left & below: Neoplan had the Cspel-based Cummins-powered N4015 low-floor bus on show; though expected to have been improved since Coach & Bus '97, the rear end arrangement is still far from ideal!





Salisbury's
future
is riding
on it



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Wilts & Dorset has taken the bold step of converting its entire Salisbury city network to low-floor buses. **STEPHEN MORRIS** takes a look

'Salisbury's future is riding on it' sounds almost a familiar slogan to those living in the catchment area of Heathrow's 'Freeflow Heathrow' campaign. But for all that, the truth behind such a slogan remains just as valid for Salisbury as it is for Heathrow.

By any standards Salisbury is a lovely city, but it's typical of so many places in Britain. Its own population, at something less than 40,000 is not huge, yet it has a large rural hinterland which looks to the city for shopping and employment. Its city centre was laid out well before motorcars were even vaguely on the horizon, and successive generations have not served the city well in trying to cope with the car. In the 1960s, with the insensitivity which seemed to dominate at the time, a dual carriageway inner ring road was built; it does nothing for the landscape and means every route out of town has to battle its way across busy roundabouts. Yet despite the inconvenience it causes, many motorists still prefer to drive across the city centre because it's shorter.

Now, in the current bid not to increase road capacity, its much needed bypass has been shelved, so prospects of any relief are remote. Thus Salisbury's future is indeed riding on public transport and in recognition of this Wilts & Dorset replaced all its city buses with low-floor vehicles during the summer.

Background

Salisbury's city services have been provided mainly by MCW Metroriders for the last 10 years. These successfully saw off one of the few major competitive incursions the city has known, when Badgerline from the north and Southern Vectis from the south were attempting to squeeze the company from both ends. It was easy to think W&D, when newly privatised, would be something of a weakling which could be seen off relatively easily, and incursions into its few potentially lucrative areas, Poole and Salisbury, would soon see the company crumble. But Wilts & Dorset was made of sterner stuff and fought back vigorously, not least by putting 85 Metroriders into service. This was a bold move; it would have seemed at the time a more prudent move to do something similar with Ford Transits or Sherpas, but the Metrorider has served the company well. Initial higher costs have more than paid for themselves with long, reliable service.

The other long-term measure which has served the company well is not to require its buses in Salisbury to run 59 minutes in every hour, as many users of minibuses might have done. Local knowledge showed that Salisbury can clog up very quickly, especially on market days (Tuesday and Saturday), and a more relaxed attitude to scheduling bought the company higher reliability.

The days of such competition are well behind it, though Wilts & Dorset cannot afford to be complacent. It is a remarkable survivor as an independent company, so far unmoved by the large premium it could fetch were it to sell to one of the major groups. Stagecoach sits on its eastern and northern flanks and FirstGroup to the west, while to the south is sea and Southern Vectis; not perhaps the most comfortable position to be in. However Wilts & Dorset has managed to carve out a good living for itself out of largely unpromising territory; it

hasn't got City shareholders all hoping for their 18%, and has been able to keep on top of fleet replacement in a highly creditable way.

The latest indication of this has been the order for 85 Optare Solos to replace those 10-year-old Metroriders one for one and that process is complete in Salisbury. Every bus on city services now has an R or S registration, and capacity on the busiest city service, that to Bemerton Heath, is kept up by three low-floor Optare Spectras. At the time of writing, that gave Salisbury the biggest fleet of low-floor double-deckers in the British Isles!

Salisbury's network

That doesn't mean that every bus you will see in Salisbury is low-floor. The bus garage in Castle Street houses just under 60 buses, and has 11 outstations spread over a large geographical area housing another 40. Wilts & Dorset as a company falls fairly naturally into two parts; services come up towards Salisbury from the south, which is in Poole's domain, and fan out again to the north, up towards Bath and Swindon, a very large area covered by Salisbury.

Salisbury's operations are based on the bus station in Endless Street, a name once well-known as the headquarters of British Bus ('We still get their post!' remarks district manager Gerald Good), though city services do not use the station. They terminate on-street, right in the heart of the city, either in or very close to the Market Square, in Blue Boar Row, New Canal, opposite the bus station in Endless Street or in Castle Street. Plans for pedestrianisation could jeopardise the excellent proximity buses currently enjoy to the main shops, but so far a series of compromises between the local councils and the bus company have provided solutions acceptable to all parties.

The city services are remarkably comprehensive yet require only 18 buses.

BUSES

ISBURY

FOR CITY



The bulk of the housing is to the west, Bemerton Heath and Wilton in particular. Wilton is actually a distinctly separate market town, and the flow between the two means that some very rural areas enjoy an intensive service of low-floor buses. When the buses get to Wilton, they turn into Wilton local services before heading back to Salisbury.

Most routes have at least four buses an hour, and some have more, though headways widen after about 18.00 and drop considerably into the late evening. There is no cross-city working on the city network, but to avoid huge amounts of dead mileage buses tend to come in from one direction then change service on to another route out in another direction. The alternative is that buses have to circumnavigate the entire city centre, due to the one-way systems, in order to go out the way they came in.

Though Wilts & Dorset's investment in new buses for Salisbury has been substantial — and the company has taken maximum advantage in publicising the fact — there is not an element of formal Quality Partnership. The local authority is doing what it can, not least in providing new bus shelters wherever possible, but the city's road network is such that there is very little scope for bus priority schemes.



Above left:

Salisbury's city network encompasses neighbouring Wilton, which has its own town network run off the back of the Salisbury services. Here Solo 2625 (S625 JRU) picks up suitably appreciative elderly passengers (the gentleman with the stick is a retired Wilts & Dorset driver) at Wilton.

PICTURES BY STEPHEN MORRIS EXCEPT WHERE STATED

Left:

Three of the low-floor buses in Salisbury are Optare Spectras. These were delivered in the spring and worked on the X3, Salisbury-Bournemouth-Poole service prior to the introduction of low-floor city services in August.

PHILIP WALLIS

SALISBURY CITY SERVICES

50, 51, 52	City Centre-Devizes Road-Bemerton Heath
53, 54	City Centre-Wilton Road-Bemerton Heath
55	City Centre-West Harnham
57	City Centre-Bishopdown
58	City Centre-District Hospital
60/60A, 61/61A	City Centre-Wilton
62	City Centre-Pauls Dene
71	Stratford-City Centre-Harnham Hill/Netherhampton
72	City Centre-Laverstock
73	City Centre-Bishopdown Farm

Indeed even siting of new bus shelters is tricky, with narrow streets and narrow pavements. Out of town however there has been good progress over the years, and in places pavements have been widened and built up to an appropriate height at bus stops. Illegal parking causes particular frustration to Wilts & Dorset, and there is a move towards designating Salisbury with Special Parking Area Status, whereby illegal parking is decriminalised, enabling the city authorities rather than the police to deal with it. Park-&-Ride is also on the agenda, with the aim of reducing long-term parking in the city centre.

Optares in service

Salisbury's city fleet has now been replaced with 16 Solos and three Spectras, giving little spare coverage with a peak vehicle requirement of 18. Eight of the E-registered Metroriders currently remain, but these are largely consigned to rural work now. However when traffic gets quite impossible Metroriders will slot in to supplement the service and keep things going. Despite the untried nature of the Solos, a full complement has been available for service most days.

Gerald Good tells us the new buses have been very well accepted. Unlike some operations converting to low-floor the Solos have actually increased capacity; 23-seat Metroriders have been replaced by 30-seat Solos on the same frequency. In general drivers have received them well; the low noise in the cab is particularly appreciated, visibility is good and drivers like the Solo's superb ride quality. Salisbury has some fairly hilly areas, and while Gerald Good was keen not to criticise the new vehicles, he eventually conceded that his guarded use of the word 'adequate' to describe the performance of the Solo, with its four-cylinder, 4.2litre engine, meant not as good as a smaller, lighter Metrorider with its six cylinder, six litre Cummins. That's understandable, though performance really is adequate, if not outstanding. If you were comparing performance on hills with earlier generations of Wilts & Dorset buses, like Bristol VRTs (and there are still about 40 of those in service with the company) then performance might be described in more glowing terms.

The Solo's size also caused some problems at first. They are 2.5m wide, compared with 2.3m of the Metrorider, and they are longer. Several of the housing estates which the minibuses penetrate were built in the 1940s and 1950s, with narrow roads and no provision for universal car ownership. Generally residents have now got used to the fact that the buses serving their roads are a little bit bigger and park accordingly, but Gerald Good would like to see more parking restrictions near junctions.

Passengers are well pleased; the Solos have been particularly well accepted in areas with concentrations of older residents, who appreciate not only the easier access for themselves but also the fact they can wheel their shopping trolleys aboard. Parents with pushchairs similarly are appreciative and a small number of regular wheelchair users are now being carried. Both types of vehicle have created a good visual impression, and luckily speed humps do not abound in Salisbury so there have been no problems of grounding.

In our previous coverage of the Solo, there has been some disparity in the *Buses* editorial office as to whether the Solo is noisy or not. My first encounter with the type (*Buses* July) was on one full of civic dignitaries and other notables, who absorbed quite a lot of the sound! Having used them in service in Salisbury, I now have to side with my colleague, Philip Lamb, and accept that the four-cylinder Mercedes does not offer great refinement and is rather noisy. It's not unacceptably so, but it's a rather irritating, intrusive sort of noise. It's fine for the driver, who is remote from it, but Salisbury now resounds to unfamiliar sounds — you know at once when a Solo is near to hand.

On the plus side our view that the ride quality is exceptional remains untarnished; the whole vehicle feels beautifully balanced and superbly damped. The neat, uncluttered interior offers an attractive and convenient passenger environment too, enhanced by a good specification and use of attractive, bright interior trim by Wilts & Dorset.

Unfortunately time did not permit us to sample a low-floor Spectra, but we hope to have a look at one of these with another operator in more detail soon.

It's perhaps a shame that more cannot be done to give buses a fighting chance in Salisbury, but the city undoubtedly has an impressive bus service now.

Below right:

Optare Solo 2617 heads out of Salisbury city centre for Laverstock, a suburb to the east.

Below:

In order to avoid having to circumnavigate the entire city centre one-way system on every trip, buses come in on one service and go out on another. 2625, having arrived from Wilton, to the north-west, on a 61, now prepares to go out again on a 55 to West Harnham, to the south-west. Destination and number displays on the Solos are electronically controlled, powered roller blinds; popular destinations and all numbers are repeated several times and different ones selected automatically to prevent them fading too quickly.



Buses Profile

MERCEDES- BENZ O.405N

Outside London it may be thought that the conurbations served by the former PTE operators are the last bastions of the British double-decker. However the double-decker has been having a thin time of it in such places, where there has been a swing to large single-deckers.

Nowhere has this been more true than in the West Midlands; fleet replacement has been cracking on apace, but since 1991 only one new double-decker has entered the fleet. This will change; now the entire Fleetline population in the fleet has been replaced and inroads are being made into Metrobuses, there will come a time when more double-deckers will appear in the fleet. Indeed 20 low-floor Optare Spectras are on their way.

Part of the reason for the influx of single-deckers has been a commitment to move towards 100% low-floor for new deliveries, though the commitment to increasing the single-deck content of the fleet had already been made. Two hundred and fifty Leyland Lynxes were followed by an order for 200 Volvo B10Bs, but after 50 were delivered orders were swapped for low-floor buses, Wright-bodied Volvo B10Ls. There have also been large deliveries of Volvo B6LEs.

Travel West Midlands has moved increasing towards single-deckers of late; its current choice, the Mercedes-Benz O.405N, is perhaps its most unusual



One of the first Mercedes-Benz O.405Ns for Travel West Midlands stands in Birmingham Central garage. 1519 (R519 XOB) is one of the 12 that were completed by UVG.
STEPHEN MORRIS



However this year's deliveries have been more unusual still. Mercedes-Benz has been keen to make a break with large buses into the British market and TWM recognised the value of not letting one manufacturer have it all its own way. So far the choice of Mercedes-Benz has proved a happy one for the operator. All of the order of 113 are now in service, though 11 articles are due to follow at the turn of the year. These will replace Metrobuses on service 51, the trunk Birmingham-Walsall service. Of the 12m rigids, some are in service in Coventry, forming Travel West Midlands' part of the Quality Partnership, some are running between West Bromwich and Walsall and 34 are running from Central garage, in Liverpool Street, close to Birmingham City Centre.

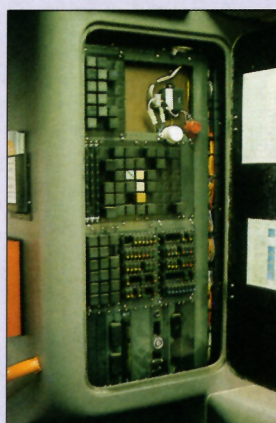
Birmingham is still busy bus territory. TWM has six garages in the city, and runs 850 buses there. Bus usage may still be dropping, albeit slowly, nationwide, but it isn't in Birmingham. Fleet size has recently had to be increased, and the next move is to enhance the service after the evening peak, recognition that the days when most people left work at 17.00 are over. Central's Mercedes have been used to improve services through Harborne; it's not exactly a corridor and the name Network Harborne has been adopted for it. Most of Central's 34 O.405Ns are route branded for Network Harborne, but some are in plain livery so that they can augment Volvos on Hagley Road.



Top:
The interior of one of a Travel West Midlands Mercedes. Obviously Germanic in appearance, TWM's high standard of seating is an attractive feature.

Above:
Also typical Germanic is the cab. The steering column is adjustable for height and rake. The steering wheel is huge, but the O.405N is very driveable and boasts excellent visibility.

Below:
A portable ramp is fitted in the cab. Though the bus was commendable free of rattles, the ramp did rattle, though was audible only from the cab. Drivers' attempts to cure it with ticket rolls are apparent!



Left:
The electronic systems are in a panel behind the cab. A diagnostic system can be plugged in, using a laptop computer; access for fitters is easy and sheltered from the elements, while the computer not only diagnoses the fault but gives step-by-step instructions as to how to remedy it. While all systems are controlled from here, units such as the electronic diesel control system are behind an external flap below the floor.



Above:
A minor problem which had to be remedied on early buses was that passengers could trap their hands between the handrails on the back-to-back seats on the rear wheelarches. That on the rear-facing seat has been removed and plugged.

The Mercedes described

Mercedes-Benz builds its O.405 range at its factory in Mannheim. It is available as an underframe for local bodybuilding or as a complete vehicle, in either conventional form or, in the case of the O.405N, in low-floor form. While the rather higher-tech, and more stylish, Citaro is shortly to come on stream, the O.405N is still a major force in its native Germany, and is built on a production line basis. Continental buses tend to be built to a more basic specification than is currently favoured in Britain, and so it was decided that the O.405N should be supplied to the British market as a running shell, and Mercedes-Benz chose UVG as a partner to finish the vehicles to UK specifications.

As is now well-known, UVG went into receivership very shortly after the project began. Only 12 of TWM's were finished by UVG (1515-26), and the rest have been fitted out at Mercedes' premises at Wentworth Park, Barnsley. TWM reckons the Barnsley-completed buses are better finished than those produced by UVG, though in fairness to UVG the change enabled TWM to respecify certain items in the light of experience of the first few. One of the modifications is that the sliding assault screen now slides downwards into the cab door; on the UVGs the screen opens upwards and could give a driver a nasty bump on the head if it slid down unexpectedly. Meanwhile a less than ideal destination box arrangement has also been improved. TWM still believes in conventional hand-wound blinds, complete with its distinctive four-track number blinds.

TWM's specification calls for 43 Callow & Maddox individual seats finished in the company's own blue moquette. These are to a new design, with a thicker, more comfortable squab compared to the earlier Volvos. TWM's standard specification includes four tip-up seats in a side-facing row at the front to create plenty of space for pushchairs and wheelchairs. The Mercedes carry a folding ramp which stows away behind the driver's seat.

Although they're only a 43-seater single-door bus the O.405Ns are a full 12m long. The wheelbase is slightly shorter than the Volvo B10Ls, consequently with a slightly longer rear overhang. The interior is entirely step free, though there is quite a severe ramp towards the rear of the bus. The engine is offset to the nearside; it is a horizontal six-cylinder in-line unit. A hatch on the nearside of the bus lifts to reveal the six individual cylinder heads.

Mercedes-Benz is proud of the fact that the massive 11,967cc unit is specifically designed for bus use and is not derived from a truck engine. Earlier examples of the engine did not feature turbocharging; on TWM's vehicles and all current build, it is turbocharged and intercooled, but only to produce Euro 2 emission levels. For

such a large engine a power output of 213bhp at a comparatively fast 2,200rpm is modest indeed, and probably accounts for the fact that TWM gets a good half a mile out of each gallon more than on its Volvos with smaller, 9.6litre engines. Fuel consumption on TWM's heavily urban routes is working out in the region of 6mpg.

Ever since the days of Metrobuses TWM has standardised on Voith transmission; however the O.405Ns feature the four-speed ZF 4HP500 automatic with built-in retarder. According to Richard Kirk at Central garage, who showed me round 1517, one of the UVG-finished buses, the shift quality is not quite so good as on the Voith box.

TWM has encountered very few problems so far with the O.405N, although maintenance for the first year is being carried out by a local Mercedes-Benz dealer, Gerrard Mann. One problem has been found with the cooling system, which is mounted in the roof as part of the heating and ventilation system, fitted by MAC; leaking joints have led to coolant seeping through the saloon ceiling. The other problem has come from the plastic fuel tank which is fitted behind the offside front wheel; on some buses this has deformed slightly and forced out a marker light in its vicinity.

The O.405N relies heavily on electronic systems; electronic diesel control contributes to low emissions, and this and other control systems are located in a hatch under the offside of the bus. Relays etc are fitted in a panel behind the cab, and this includes a socket to enable a lap-top computer to be plugged in for full diagnostic capability. When a fault is found the computer then gives step-by-step instructions to remedy it. The electronics also include a comprehensive engine protection system; for example if coolant levels should drop the engine speed is automatically limited to prevent overheating.

Internally the TWM vehicles benefit from muted grey laminates and TWM's attractive blue moquette, which gives a quality ambience to the interior, and this is complemented by deep windows all round and full-length Transmatic lighting.

On the road

The Mercedes is a very refined vehicle. It all seems well put together, and 1517 displayed no signs of squeaks or rattles. Our initial impression of the O.405, with the first Alexander-bodied bus introduced some six years ago, was that it was noisy. The TWM bus was however much quieter. There is quite an appealing cocktail of sounds, with the usual slight whine from the ZF gearbox, a purposeful but unobtrusive growl from the engine, topped off by whistling from the turbocharger

when working hard, while air systems make their presence felt too. It's all very subdued though, even if Richard Kirk, a self-confessed Volvo fan, reckons the company's B10Ls are quieter still.

Ride quality is quite superb, and the overall effect is of a very high-quality vehicle, as you might expect of a Mercedes-Benz.

The most noticeable thing for the driver is the massive steering wheel, about the size of that on a good old Leyland Leopard. The cab is laid out in typically Germanic VöV style, with a wrap-around dashboard with rather more switches, dials and lamps than are usually found on British buses. As usual the ZF gearbox is controlled from a simple selection of push buttons, and the spring handbrake is controlled from a small lever on the offside of the cab. The steering wheel is nearer to the horizontal than on many buses these days, but has a wide range of adjustment. Visibility through the deep double-curvature two-piece windscreen is magnificent, actually aided by the comparatively low mounting of the driving position.

The other thing which struck me was the very rapid acceleration. On paper both power rating (213bhp for a bus with an unladen weight of around 10.5 tonnes) and torque (700lb/ft @ 1,100rpm) appear modest. The way the bus performs suggests much higher figures on both counts, though power delivery is beautifully smooth. Acceleration is stunning without seeming harsh. However the massive steering wheel proved quite a handful, when accelerating from rest from a T-junction into a dual carriageway; so unexpected was the surge of power that it took some very rapid spinning of the wheel to get the bus back on to a straight line. The size of the steering wheel gives you little option but to feed the wheel through your hands in correct fashion.

Our drive, from Central garage, took in a circuit of Birmingham City Centre. Birmingham has quite an advanced road network compared with most British city

centres, but even so a 12m bus did seem unwieldy in such conditions. Somehow a 9m double-decker would have seemed better suited to Central Birmingham, though drivers seem to cope OK with both O.405Ns and similarly-sized B10Ls. But size apart the O.405N was certainly a driver's bus. Richard Kirk reckons drivers coming off Metrobuses find the O.405N is a massive improvement, but that those who are used to Volvos tend to prefer Volvos. But there is little room to complain with the Mercedes. It's a fine all rounder and a well-built, very comfortable heavyweight. Travel West Midlands is currently issuing tenders for the next round of supply of 12m single-deckers. While nothing is yet finalised, further Mercedes are likely to figure — but whether these will be more O.405Ns or Citaros, which Mercedes intends to introduce to the UK market by 2000, remains to be seen.

Below right:

In central Birmingham in Network Harborne livery (though without lettering applied) is another UVG-finished Mercedes O.405N, 1520 (R120 XOB).

TIM CARTER

Below:

With the very distinctive route branding for the Coventry Primeline service is 16549 (R549 XOB).

CHRIS MORRISON



Reviews

LONDON BUSES IN THE 1960s **KEN GLAZIER. CAPITAL TRANSPORT.** **280mm x 220mm 224pp HARDBACK. £25**

This 'blockbuster' book is authoritative, exhaustive and fascinating. Its 12 chapters and 400 pictures, of which 60 are in colour, covers all aspects of LT's bus operation in the 1960s — 'unhappy years but not without innovation', according to the author. Its coverage of the country bus and Green Line fleets is, conveniently and coincidentally, of their last years as part of LT: from the beginning of 1970 they became a subsidiary of the National Bus Company.

The book's chapters are of varying length, and describe particular aspects of LT under various headings, ranging from the obvious such as trolleybus replacement to the less obvious such as traffic management, which describes the numerous schemes in the London area and their — usually detrimental — effects on bus services.

Most events portrayed happened 30 years ago or more, but it is the attitudes of both management and staff that seem to be positively antediluvian. There was the LT board and most (but not all) senior managers insisting (on grounds of dubious evidence) that the optimum sized bus for London was a 27ft long 64-seater with open rear platform and wanting to replace every 11 56-seat RTs in service with 10 RMs, on the basis that there would still be more seats per hour on offer, yet there would be a worthwhile productivity gain. Happily the platform staff, probably for the wrong reasons, successfully opposed this move.

During much of the 1960s the central bus staff clung to an ancient, inefficient rostering agreement that precluded working on more than one route in a shift and also imposed other restrictive conditions. As LT planners struggled to improve productivity gains in the face of declining traffic they produced longer and more improbable routes, most of which were never worked end-to-end anyway. But they were efficient in terms of hours of productive work, even if they didn't meet the needs of the travelling public. There also came an increasing habit of swapping over the ends of two routes because as altered they made better use of crews and vehicles: never mind the cross-town travellers who now had to change buses. That is, alas, a practice still used by the present LT planners.

The vehicle side is not neglected. We hear about the development of the Routemaster, including the one-and-only forward entrance one, which never worked on an LT route. We hear about the belated acceptance of the rear-engined double-decker, and the dashed hopes for the FRM. We see the changing orders for rear-engined single-deckers and the difficulties in finding routes for the 36ft long ones.

The reshaping plan with its emphasis on short, satellite routes centred on bus stations was launched in September 1966, yet little attention was apparently given to finding sites or funding for the stations. And the first fruits of the plan came not, as intended in 1967, but a year later still. Hopes and doubts over fare collection systems also came to the fore. Coupled to this was a 1966 project between Leyland, Park Royal and LT for a low-floor, eight-wheeled double-decker. It was dropped two years later, though similar ideas were later to resurface as the XRM project.

The most depressing chapter is one of the shortest and deals with labour relations, which was a sad saga of almost continuous negotiations, or rather non-negotiations.

It was often a three-sided battle between LT, the Transport & General Workers Union and the garage

delegates, with the delegates rejecting most proposals. Some of the true costs of replacing frequent RF-operated Green Line routes by less frequent Routemasters are revealed in the chapter on the Green Line network. The 20-minute headway 715 (Guildford-London-Hertford) and hourly 715A (London-Hertford) needed seven double-deck RT-operated peak hour duplicates on Mondays to Fridays. The through service was cut to half-hourly and several duplicates were withdrawn. Seven vehicles and 20 crews were saved, while mileage run dropped 28%. Savings of £33,600 a year were the calculated result which was apparently thought satisfactory: nobody bothered about an immediate loss of 28% of the passengers.

Whatever your particular interests in London, you are bound to find much of interest in this fascinating book. It is well printed with excellent reproduction, and some surprising pictures too, such as colour views of a prewar RT on training duties and of a former STL painted green and in use as a tree-cutter.

JOHN ALDRIDGE

LUXURY TRAVEL **STEWART J. BROWN. CAPITAL TRANSPORT.** **250mm x 220mm 112pp HARDBACK.** **£16.95**

It hardly needs saying that there are plenty of books about buses on the market these days.

There aren't so many on coaching, which is probably because many of us find buses more interesting than coaches. Yet this superb new book from Capital may be just the thing to change that. Its sub-title is 'Coach Designs in Britain, 1958-73', but don't let that rather worthy-sounding description put you off. It does indeed cover the development of coach designs over that 25 year period, but it puts the massive changes in styling, shape, size and performance into context. This is no treatise on coach design with no human touches; instead it describes developments in coach operations throughout the period and how coach design evolved accordingly.

The book is illustrated throughout in colour (there are a few black and white pictures) and reproduction is quite superb. Obtaining colour pictures of coaches for a period up to 40 years ago is no mean feat, but this really is lavishly illustrated and few pictures are anything short of excellent. Some have come from sources not previously well-known, while there is

some judicious use of manufacturers' pictures, many of which are now period pieces in their own right. Readers are unlikely to find many pictures which are already familiar to them.

Moreover the feeling of the period is conveyed by the inclusion of brochures, mainly of manufacturers but some of operators too. What comes over is the huge variety in styles over the period; at the beginning halfcabs were still in use and by the end the Continental builders are making their presence felt, 12m coaches are legal and vehicles are designed for 70mph motorway running. All manner of manufacturers are covered; some coaches still come across as design classics, others reflect the spirit of the ages, for better or worse, and some are quite distasteful and misguided. It all makes a fascinating browse, and Stewart Brown's usual readable style tells the story admirably. The field of coach books is not a big one, but even if it were this would stand alone in it. Even if you thought you weren't interested in coaches, you are unlikely to be disappointed by this book, which, given the fact it is printed in colour throughout, is good value for money.

STEPHEN MORRIS

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Grey-Green memories

Sir,

The picture of the two London-bound Grey-Green vehicles (News, *Buses* November) must have pleased the many of your readers who have been associated with that operator. That Grey-Green Coaches is no longer a going concern might be considered a matter of regret but like an old soldier, it really faded away.

From 1948, when I first took employment at Stamford Hill, the character of Grey-Green changed over the years from a large and very successful family concern under the direction of J. H. Ewer, to being part of a burgeoning Ewer motor trade group and then in 1980 to an outpost of the Cowie Group, transformed from 'odd ball' status to star performer by investing its resources and skills into providing bus services in London.

For the first ten years after World War 2 the operation was divided between the best group of seasonal coach services in London and all-year services between the capital and East Anglia. Both benefited from the immediate problems of the postwar economy with its lack of serious competition from rail or private car. These economic factors turned about in 20 years and, even though most coach services competitors and neighbours were taken over, the seasonal coach business gradually died. The all-year-round express coach traffic in Britain is now no more than a shadow of its past. Although National Express ruined the last years of the East Anglian operation, it has to be acknowledged that its philosophy serves best so much of the business that remains.

Excellent management though it has been in the circumstances of the last years of this century, it was not Grey-Green's success in the Capital's bus services that made the name respected. It is the recollection of the frequent sight on London's streets and on the roads out of the Capital the smart and reasonably uniform coaches that is synonymous with the name.

Tom McLachlan,
Datchworth, Herts

Little bus stops and wrong bodies

Sir,

It was good to see the Linton bus stop, with the younger Mr Morris, in *Buses* October ('Millar's Tales'). Linton is very small and picturesque, perched on the Greensand Ridge overlooking the Weald of Kent. The Parish Council is keen to keep it tidy and approached Maidstone & District, during my time as Operations Director there, to see if we could have a less obtrusive sign. As there is no alternative site, we custom-made the sign to blend in with the village green.

It's funny how things go — it's now my local bus stop. (It wasn't then, before you start jumping to conclusions — I lived in Chatham at the time!)

Turning to p37 of the same issue, Sheffield Atlantean 1357 was *not* an early example of its body styling. The first example of this Park Royal design — which became known as the 'Sheffield style' — was Atlantean 340 (AWB 340B), the bus at the 1964 Commercial Motor Show which retained its Atlantean badge and silver bumpers into service. This was followed by 30 Fleetlines (964-993) then umpteen Atlanteans. 1357 was a 'B'-fleet bus with ordinary 1962 MCW bodywork, which had an accident and was rebodied by Park Royal. The body is interesting in that it was full-height; the others were low-height. The 'B'-fleet took in 16 Atlanteans (1101-16: TWE 101-16F) with this highbridge body, so perhaps 1357's new body was added to that order?

It does make it a unique bus and nice to see it preserved. When the 'B'-fleet joined with the 'A' it became 227.

Congratulations on a continuing excellent standard in *Buses*.

Roger Davies,
Linton, Kent

Breaking points

Sir,

I would like to take issue with Rhodri Clark's very generalised view of ticketing arrangements on Britain's buses ('Give Us A Break', *Buses*, November). Whilst I accept that the problems he has highlighted do exist, there are places which offer good value for money through-ticketing.

In the West Midlands, there has now been a Daysaver ticket available for more than five years. The last time I was in the area it gave unlimited travel on Travel West Midlands, Travel Your Bus, and Travel Merry Hill buses on the day of purchase for only £2.40. As these operators cover the majority of the Birmingham and Black Country market, the need for interchangeability between operators is minimal, although Centro does offer a more expensive all-operator ticket.

In contrast, on Teeside, the major operators have got together and introduced the Tripper ticket. This is valid on all Arriva and Stagecoach buses in the Middlesbrough, Stockton and Billingham areas, and gives unlimited travel for only £2.15. There are no restrictions on times of use, although the child version, at £1.45 is not valid for unaccompanied travel after 19.00. I am certain that these cannot be the only such tickets in the country.

For those who want more regular travel, Stagecoach has been expanding its MegaRider tickets in almost every subsidiary. These come in two forms; tickets which require the use of a photocard tend to be cheaper, for example the Teeside MegaRider, valid in the same area as the Tripper above, is priced at £5.75 for seven days' travel; tickets which do not require a photocard tend to be a little more expensive, but as they are interchangeable, and useable by anyone in the family, still represent good value for money. To put the value for money provided by the Teeside MegaRider into perspective, the single fare between any two of Middlesbrough, Stockton and Billingham is £1.10. Because of the Tripper, there are no return tickets.

Normally I find Mr Clark's articles very interesting and informative, but on this occasion it would appear that he has been unable to see beyond the English/Welsh border.

Richard Cranmer,
Preston

No turning back

Sir,

John Aldridge's item 'The Wrong Cuts' ('In London', *Buses* November), prompted me to compare the effects of driver shortages on London Transport routes with those in Greater Manchester. Despite what the so-called 'national' media may tell us, staff shortages in the bus industry are not a problem peculiar to London. In fact judging by the quarterly reliability reports posted in Euston Bus Station, and the guaranteed £246 a week offered by London General, the problem is far worse in Manchester (and probably other northern cities).

Here, the low pay and high risk of missile attacks mean the problem is worst on evening services, and this is where the comparison with LT routes comes in. In the evening many services are subsidised by GMPTE which, understandably, has its own penalty system for non-compliance of contracts. Consequently, in order to maintain 100% operation of these services, all reliability problems have to be concentrated on commercial routes. The irony is of course, that this means a higher number of passengers are inconvenienced for each journey that fails to operate as, quite logically, the buses on commercial routes carry significantly higher loads than those subsidised by the PTE.

Finally, I have to disagree with Mr Aldridge about the merits of 'turning short', although in doing so, I acknowledge that he is probably talking about frequent services with on-road supervision, whereas my experience (not as a passenger, thankfully) is that in Greater Manchester it tends to affect sections of route with a 30 minute headway, with the 'supervision' coming from an over-worked controller sat in a depot, monitoring a whole network affected by severe traffic congestion. Consequently, it is not unknown for consecutive journeys to be turned short, resulting in intending passengers waiting for 90 minutes, and passengers already on the bus being turfed off en route, in the hope that the next bus won't be too far away!

P. Longdon,
Denton, Manchester

On the surface turning short seems not to be a good thing, though I was recently on a convoy of three London Transport 237s scampering towards their outer terminus, Sunbury Village, carrying between them about four passengers. Two could easily have turned back, causing no inconvenience to anybody (except the drivers), and plugging the large gap which was clearly building up in the opposite direction — Ed

No liquidation at Lancaster

Sir,

I was disappointed to note that Peter Hesketh in his article on Warrington Borough Transport (*Buses* October) inferred that Lancaster City Transport was driven into liquidation.

To try and correct the record — since this has been alleged on many occasions — I would like to point out that Lancaster City Council put LCT up for sale as a going concern and a number of bids were made for the company which at the time was trading profitably and was unusual in that the vast majority of the fleet was owned and paid for rather than leased.

When the City Council came to consider the final bids it chose to sell the key assets to Stagecoach and close the company down rather than sell it as a going concern purely because, in doing so, the Stagecoach bid for these key assets, together with the separate sale of Lonsdale Coaches, would bring more money into the City Council's coffers than would have been the case with the straight sale of the company. As a result of this LCT went into voluntary liquidation despite operating profitably to the end.

Thomas W. W. Knowles,
Former managing director,
Lancaster City Transport

This is a letters page and the views expressed therein are purely the views of the writers; they do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or publisher of BUSES.

PICTURE



Above:
First Midland Bluebird uses this open-top Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlantean on a hop-on, hop-off tourist service in Stirling in competition with Guide Friday. 765 (HRS 265V) came from Grampian (now First Aberdeen) last year. It returned to its home city for the centenary of public transport celebrations on 22-23 August.
PAUL CHANCELLOR

Right:
Stagecoach is beginning to use ex-London Leyland Titans on open-top work, with the front end left intact. This has led to problems on Arran, as recorded in 'Fleet News Scotland' last month, as the one there is too tall to fit in the garage at Brodick. A similar bus, former T1093 (B93 WUV) is used by Bluebird Buses, as its No080, on Guide Friday work in Inverness.
PAUL CHANCELLOR



VIEW

Open Top in Scotland



Above:

In *Buses* November 1997 this Ailsa featured in 'The Fenton File', working in Dundee for Tayside. It's still there, working for Tayside's successor Travel Dundee, and is possibly the most unusual recipient of the current Travel West Midlands livery. **MURDOCH CURRIE**

Left:

Fife Scottish Leyland Atlantean FRN1 (ABV 669A) is a 1961 former Devon General Seadog. It is currently in traditional Fife livery, and came to the company from Cumberland in 1992 for the St Andrews open-top tour. It was originally Devon General 927 (927 GTA) and passed to Western National in 1971, then to National Bus Company's engineering and sales company APT in 1982. It returned to service with Ribble in 1985, passing with some of that company's more northerly operations to Cumberland. It is seen here at the Lathalmond open day in August. **THOMAS BRYCELAND**

BIRKENHEAD

A significant part of the regeneration scheme in Birkenhead is the provision of a small bus and tram museum in Pacific Road, about a quarter of a mile or so from Woodside, terminal of the famous Mersey Ferries. The two are linked by a newly-built street tramway extending a little beyond the museum, for which two traditional trams, built in Hong Kong to the same design as those in service there, have been specially constructed. The service commenced early in 1995.

Apart from stabling these two magnificent trams, plus some historical examples either fully restored or in the process of restoration, the museum is currently the home of the 201 Group, custodians of several buses of local origin, including the famous Wallasey no1, the pioneer Leyland Atlantean, featured elsewhere in this issue. On 4 October, this organisation combined with the Crosville Enthusiasts' Club to stage the first and highly successful Wirral Bus & Tram Show. Frequent bus and coach tours of the dock hinterland were operated by a good cross section of vehicles, provided by the 201 Group, the Crosville Enthusiasts' Club and an assortment of visitors. Thus, according to taste, it was possible to sample the delights of the first and last Leyland Atlantean, rear entrance double-deckers, Bristol RE saloons from early National Bus Company days and even an immaculately presented Plaxton-bodied Bedford VAL. Such was the variety on offer, that we soon got to know the route round the Docks, never tiring of passing close to two of the three remaining Mersey Ferries currently (and regrettably) laid up on this side of the river.

Of the contingent of Crosville vehicles present, the majority were REs in various guises. The company's successors, PMT, trading as First Crosville, and Arriva Cymru were also represented, the latter providing the last Leyland National of them all, Mk2 SNL49 (C49 OCM). A selection of MTL vehicles attended too, including the final Leyland Atlantean 1070 (B826 KWM) — indeed the Atlantean was present in some numbers, still riding high following the previous week's celebrations, but for us the 'stars' were two local Leyland Titans — Wallasey no54 (AHF 850) and Birkenhead no10 (FBG 910) — not to mention Birkenhead no93 (RCM 493), a recently restored Massey-bodied Leyland Leopard L1.

Space precludes as usual mention of the many other interesting vehicles which took the trouble to attend and contribute towards the success of the day. Apologies therefore to those we have failed to mention, and thanks to Lezley Goodwin of the Crosville Enthusiasts' Club for her help and hospitality, which contributed greatly to our enjoyment of the event.



Left:

Not a common sight on the rally scene, but in evidence two weeks running recently, firstly at the Preston Garage Open Day on 27 September, and then here at Birkenhead the following Sunday was this magnificent ex-Wallasey Metro-Cammell-bodied 1951 Leyland PD2/1 54 (AHF 850).

Above:

The other PD2 attracting considerable interest was ex-Birkenhead 10 (FBG 910), with somewhat more modern-looking Massey bodywork built in 1958, and in the care of the 201 Group. Both Titans are currently housed at the Birkenhead Bus & Tram Museum.

Birkenhead's vast Dockland is undergoing an ambitious regeneration programme. The restored buildings and bridges provided an interesting backdrop, against which the 50 or more buses and coaches attending the first Wirral Bus & Tram Show could be displayed to advantage. PHILIP LAMB was there. Pictures by the author.

EAD'S FIRST



Left:

Chris Elmes' Duple-bodied Bedford YRQ has recently been returned to Phillips livery, courtesy of the original owners. It is seen here in company with ex-Midland Red Marshall-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3B/2R 343 (GJW 43N) in Midland Express livery, with which it shares accommodation.

Above:

Much of the Crosville contingent comprised Bristol REs in various guises. During its long life, the ECW bodywork underwent many styling changes, particularly to the front end. Compare the progress made between 1970 and 1973 — SRG181 (EFM 181H) and ERG280 (YFM 280L) in dual-purpose livery are both RELL6Gs.

Revealing hidden treasures on Saturday 5 December 1998 Museum road run and rally



London Transport Museum is moving its reserve collection of buses to The Depot - a new collections centre under construction at Acton Town opening in 1999. This special day will give you a chance to see historic vehicles not on display the Museum.



**London Transport
Museum**

Covent Garden Piazza

For more details including timetable and vehicle list, call the London Transport Museum on 0171 379 6344 or visit our website www.ltmuseum.co.uk

**Rally on Covent Garden Piazza ♦ Special shop promotions
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ATLANTIAN

27 September saw the biggest gathering of Leyland Atlanteans to date. The occasion was the 40th anniversary of the entry into service of the type — destined to change the shape of the double-deck bus forever. The event was organised in Leyland itself by the British Commercial Vehicle Museum. Space permits us to show you only a small sample of the buses present. Pictures by PHILIP LAMB (except where stated).



IN THE BEGINNING . . .

Before the Atlantean proper was born, two 'concept' vehicles (known as Lowloaders) were constructed. The Lowloaders had conventional rear entrances, necessitating the use of the compact O.350 engine in turbocharged form, which effectively sat on the platform, with the front wheels remaining in their traditional position. Only the second XTC 684 remains. XTC 684 incorporates a halfcab arrangement (the first was fully-fronted, resembling a contemporary trolleybus), and is in the care of the British Commercial Vehicle Museum. It is hoped that full restoration will commence shortly. It is seen here alongside the sole remaining ex-Standerwick 'Gay Hostess' Atlantean coach no25 (SFV 421), also a candidate for early restoration.



THE FIRST AND THE LAST . . .

Production of the Atlantean commenced in 1958, and continued for 25 years, with the improved AN68 model superseding the early PDR1 in 1972. The first Atlantean off the production line was ex-Wallasey no1 (FHF 451) with bodywork by MCW, seen here on the left in its renowned 'sea-green' livery. The last production Atlantean was fittingly delivered to Wallasey Corporation's successor Merseyside PTE in 1983. It is currently operating with MTL subsidiary Wirral Peninsula Buses. Merseyside PTE was one of the biggest users of the Atlantean, its latter day counterpart MTL still having more than 200, including the last, 1070 (B926 KWM) with Alexander body to PTE specification — seen here on the right — in service.



A BUS WITH STYLE . . .

Early bodywork was criticised within the industry for being box-like and unappealing, but in fact the public saw such vehicles as a symbol of modernity. The first real attempt to break the mould came in 1962, again from Merseyside, this time from the other side of the water. Liverpool Corporation ordered a large batch of bodies from MCW to its own design, which later evolved, being produced by other builders too. L501 (501 KD), the 1962 Commercial Motor show exhibit, is now preserved by the Mersey & Calder Bus Preservation Society. It is seen here in Preston, taking turn on the free bus service linking Leyland with another equally successful and parallel event — Preston Bus Open Day.

AN 40 years!

IMPROVING THE BREED . . .

Other attempts to improve the look of bodywork on 1960s examples made use of fibreglass dash panels.

One of the more popular designs of such originated with Manchester Corporation. The style is depicted here on beautifully-presented ex-Devon General MCW-bodied PDR1/1 537 (NDV 537G).

Its body was actually assembled by Saunders-Roe



MEANWHILE BACK IN MANCHESTER . . .

Manchester Corporation set out in 1968 to do what Liverpool had done six years before, and introduce its own unique body style. The 'Mancunian', as it was dubbed was an instant success — there was no turning back. From then on operators demanded, and got, style from the bodybuilders. Manchester Corporation and its successor SELNEC placed large numbers of Mancunians in service both on Atlantean and Daimler Fleetline chassis. Attending the rally was the forerunner of them all, The Greater Manchester Museum of Transport's Park Royal-bodied PDR1/1 1001 (HVM 901F).



ENTER THE JUMBO . . .

For a brief period 33 foot-long double-deckers (commonly known as Jumbos) enjoyed the limelight. This example, preserved in the colours of its last operator, Isle of Man Transport, is another ex-Merseyside PTE bus, starting life as its 1235 (XKC 862K) in 1971. It is an Alexander-bodied PDR2/1 — its bodystyle clearly developed from the early Liverpool style MCW example seen opposite. Many of the features were incorporated into Alexander's own design, and made available on the open market.

NIGEL APPLEFORD



AND SOME OF THE REST . . .

Looking along the back row here we see some, but by no means all, of the other buses in attendance, notably ex-Great Yarmouth GEX 740F one of 17 Atlanteans built new as single-deckers (a few former double-deckers have been rebodied as single-deckers over the years), and AN68s with bodywork by East Lincs (Fishwick, ex-Wigan and ex-Oldham) and Northern Counties (First Manchester and ex-GMPT) and an ex-Trent MCW-bodied PDR1/1. Further coverage of this event and the Preston Bus open day will appear in Preserved Bus no5, on sale 17 December.

ISLE OF WIGHT RUNNING DAY

The Isle of Wight Bus Museum will be holding its second annual running day on 29 November. The museum itself will be open from 11.00hrs (admission £1.80), when a free shuttle service to and from Newport bus station will begin. From 12.00hrs, free bus services via Newport bus station will again be provided, some visiting sites of transport interest on the Island. For the benefit of photographers, services will continue after dark, finishing around 18.30hrs.

Further details may be obtained from Derek Gawn, 15 Forest Close, Newport, IoW PO30 5SF (SAE please).

Right:
Southern Vectis 1962 Bristol FS6G 573 (YDL 318) taking part in last year's IoW running day.
PHILIP LAMB



LT MUSEUM ROAD RUN

The London Transport Museum is moving its reserve collection to new premises — 'The Depot', adjacent to Acton Town Underground on Saturday 5 December, with many exhibits travelling under their own power.

Ten vehicles, all of which are seldom seen on the road, will pass through Shoreditch, Bishopsgate, Fleet Street and Aldwych from around 09.00-09.30, and will be on display outside the LT Museum in Covent Garden from 10.30 to 16.00 before heading west for Acton via Piccadilly, Knightsbridge and South Kensington.

Further details to include a vehicle list and timetable are available from the London Transport Museum on 0171 379 6344.

NATIONAL FEDERATION AGM

The National Federation for Bus & Coach Preservation will be holding its first Annual General Meeting on Sunday 6 December at 'The Staff of Life', Foregate Street, Stafford, commencing at 11.00 hrs. All interested parties are invited to attend.

SAMUEL LEDGARD SOCIETY

This new venture was formed on 14 October this year, the 31st anniversary of the demise of the well-respected and much-loved bus operator — Samuel Ledgard of Armley, Leeds. The inaugural meeting, a reunion of interested parties at Otley, was attended by more than 100 guests, nearly 40 of whom enrolled as founder members.

Open to all, the first year's membership fee is £5. A regular newsletter is planned, and it is hoped to continue the reunion on a much larger scale, perhaps combining it with a rally at a venue within the company's former operating area.

Membership forms may be obtained from The Membership Secretary, 58 Kirklees Drive, Farsley, Pudsey LS28 5TE.

GMT TITAN PRESERVED

Having been thwarted in its wish to preserve the first Greater Manchester B15 Leyland Titan, 4001 (GNF 1V) — it was broken up in 1990 — the SELNEC Preservation Society turned its attention in 1994 to the last of the batch 4015 (GNF 15V), at that time owned by Munson of Beeston.

Not wishing the same fate to befall 4015, the society approached its owner, but was informed that it was only for sale on a commercial basis. This was obviously out of the question for a charitable trust, and the vehicle was subsequently sold to Universitybus, Hatfield. After a short time it was withdrawn, leading to the society making another attempt to acquire 4015. It was however sold to the Village Group, Liverpool, and taken over with that operation by MTL in the Spring of 1998. During this period, the society had kept in touch with Village, in an attempt to prevent the object of its desires from being inadvertently broken up.

Although MTL operates a large Titan fleet, it had no use for 4015 as it is fitted with a Leyland TL11 engine, the Gardner-engined version being standard in that fleet, and so it agreed to its sale to the society at a discounted figure for preservation.

GNF 15V seen in service in Watford, during its brief career with Universitybus.
PHILIP LAMB



FYLDE TRANSPORT WEEKEND

The Lancastrian Transport Trust will be staging this event over the weekend of 21/22 November, when it is hoped to run in service for the first time Lytham 70, a Leyland PD2A on long-term loan from the St Helens Transport Museum, and recently restored by the Trust. Other vehicles in use will be Lytham 77, Blackpool 512 and Blackpool 554.

Each day's programme will commence in Blundell Street, near the tram depot, at 11.00hrs. Additionally, a 'Beer & Buses' mystery tour will depart the Counting House, Talbot Square on the Saturday at 19.30.

KING ALFRED'S TRADITIONAL NEW YEAR

It will be business as usual on 1 January 1999 in Winchester, the date and venue of the annual Friends of King Alfred Buses' running day. Pride of place this year will go to POU 494, a Leyland PD2, repatriated from America by FoKAB and running in service in its home city for the first time in many, many years. See the advertisement elsewhere in this issue for full details.

BUSES RALLY CALENDAR

As usual *Buses* will be producing a rally calendar and museum guide in 1999. Would rally organisers and museum representative please send any information to *Buses Rally Calendar*, Ian Allan Publishing Ltd, River Dene Business Park, Molesey Road, Hersham, Surrey KT12 4RG, to reach us by 10 February please. As in previous years, *Buses* offers this service entirely free of charge.

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5th & 6th December 1998 - A Christmas Cracker

All aboard for a cracker of a day out at our Pre-Christmas festival. Get transport-type presents, take a ride on a vintage bus and have a look at the entertainment laid on. The free vintage bus service provides a link to The Manchester Model railway exhibition. A perfect way to round off the season.

The Museum shop is open during normal opening hours with a varied selection of models, books, videos and other transport associated memorabilia on sale.

COLLECTORS FAIR

Sunday 29th November (11am - 5pm)

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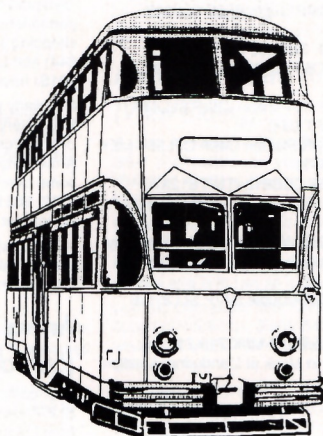
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Ken Stanway, Chair of the SMMT Bus and Coach Technical Committee, kindly writes to show correct use of the term 'pcv'.

The term 'pcv' should correctly never be applied to a vehicle. 'Passenger Carrying Vehicle' is only a **driver** licensing category, closely equating to European Union category C. The term Public Service Vehicle is still the correct term to be applied to **operator** licensing and **vehicle** certification. Thus, a vehicle certified for hire and reward purposes must always be said to have **psv** and not **pcv** status.

Aintree Coachline, Bootle

A Northern Counties Palatine I-bodied Volvo Olympian is now on order, the order for a Dennis Trident being cancelled.

Ambermile Group

The **Headlight** fleet is now numbered, viz:

DAF-engined Leyland National 11351A/1R/B50F 9, 10, 12-16 (AOL 9T etc) 806/8/12/22 (OOX 806R etc), 840-3/8/50 (TVP 840S etc) (822 is B49F). Leyland National NL106AL11/1R/B40F 49, 51 (DOC 49, 51V).

DAF-engined Leyland National 11351/1R/B50F 475/81, 507/17 (ROK 475M, TOE 481, 507/17N)

MCW Metrorider MF150/96/B23F 683/4 (F683/4 YOG), 898 (F898 OYR).

MCW Metrorider MF150/27/B23F 835/8 (E835/8 BTN)

835/98 are route-branded for service 38B (Barnsley-Grimethorpe). Leyland National 12 carries special branding as the 'Hoyland Hopper' at front.

Leyland National TVP 839S has been withdrawn.

Andrews-Sheffield Omnibus, Sheffield YT

Dodge S56 minis 1500/2 (E412 EPE, D677 SEM) have been returned by Yorkshire Terrier, 1502 being withdrawn straight away, 1500 retained as standby spare for MCW Metrorider 1503.

Leyland Fleetline 1717 (TVP 868S) has been officially withdrawn, after partial dismantling, whilst the remains of similar 1727 (SDA 773S) have been taken by Wigley, Carlton (dealer).

Applebys, Conisholme

Former Nottingham Leyland Atlanteans SNU 458X is now in fleet livery, with SNU 460X expected to follow. The company has kindly confirmed that former Southend open-top Daimler Fleetlines WJN 372/3J were scrapped as long ago as 1994.

Arriva Colchester AA

It is expected that this fleet, along with East Herts & Essex and Southend, will be completely renumbered into The Shires four-digit numbering system in January.

Former East Herts & Essex Dennis Dart SLFs 419/20/2 (P419 HVX etc) are now route-branded for service 5.

Arriva Crawley & East Surrey AA (London & Country)

The former Horsham Buses operation has been sold off privately and is now to run under the Countryliner brand. Sixteen vehicles and the lease on the former Blue Saloon base at Slyfield Green in Guildford are included in the deal.

Arriva Cymru AA

DAF SB220/Plaxton Prestige gas bus demonstrator R990 RNW has been in use at Mold.

Acquisitions continue with further ex-Yorkshire Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/ECW H45/33F added to stock as DOG510/31/76 (CWR 510Y, EWR 531Y, A576 NWX), more Leyland Lynxes in the shape of LX2R11C15Z4S/B49F SLG34, 35 (G34, 35 VME) new to Maidstone and LX2R11G15Z4S/B49F SLG311-5 (G311-5 DPA) new to London & Country, all from Croydon & North Surrey, along with LX1126LXCTFR2/B50F E254 TUB and LX1126LXCTFR1S/B49F E258/62 TUB also from Yorkshire and as-yet un-numbered. Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander B23F MMM455/6 (M455/6 HPG), MMM758 (M458 JPA), 709D/Alexander B22FL MMM770 (N470 SPA) and 709D/Plaxton Beaver B23F MMM771 (N671 TPF) have come from Guildford & West Surrey.

Some unfamiliar types are also now in stock, with the following acquired from Purple Motors of Bethesda recently:

Volvo Ailsa B55-10/Alexander H44/31D DVV330 (NSP 330R)

Bedford YMT/Duple B53F SBB7 (BEY 7W)

Leyland Leopard PSU3E/4R/Plaxton B51F rebody SLL214 (HIL 2148, TUP 572V originally with Willowbrook body)

Leyland Leopard PSU3B/4R/Duple B53F SLL310 (HPG 31N)

Bedford YNT/Duple C53F SBB389 (GEY 389Y)

Volvo B10M-61/Plaxton C53F CVV395 (MEY 395, C120 DWR)

Leyland Leopard PSU3F/4R/Plaxton C53F SLL447 (EJC 447X, HIL 2147, LFT 93X)

Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R/Plaxton C49F CTL554 (JEY 554Y, HCC 852, UTN 956Y)

Bedford YMQ/Duple C45F SBB812 (TNR 812X)

Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RZ/Plaxton C57F CTL819 (NEY 819, D900 STU)

Leyland Leopard PSU4C/2R/Willowbrook B44F rebody SLL867 (HEN 867N, originally with Northern Counties bodywork)

Leyland Leopard PSU4D/2R/Duple B47F SLL875/6 (TMB 875/6R)

Optare MetroRider MRO5/B31F MMC719-21 (J719-21 CUM) are now in stock at Llandudno Junction ex-Arriva Yorkshire.

Arriva Derby AA (City Rider)

Former Londonlinks Volvo Citybus B10M-50/East Lancs H45/31D now in stock are 4320/4/31 (H650/5/74 GPF). H650 GPF is also reported as 4230 and as being converted to single-door before use. By contrast, Scania N113DRBs 160-4 (N160-4 VVO) have been transferred to Fox County.

Recent Volvo Olympians 4639/40 (R639/40 MNU) are now route-branded for Alveston services. Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Alexander ALX100 B27F 52, 61 (R152/61 UAL) are in use, thought on loan from Fox County following 89 (P489 CAL) being burnt out.

The first standard Volvo Ailsas withdrawn are 111/7 (SRC 111X, TCH 117X).

Arriva East Herts & Essex AA (County Bus)

New are Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F MBV940-52 (R940-52 VPU) in County 'Lea Valley' cream and green. Unused MBV953/4 (R953/4 VPU) passed to Southend and were repainted in Arriva livery before use there.

Acquisitions from London North are MCW Metrobus DR101/12/MCW H43/28D M266, M491 (BYX 266V, GYE 491W) and similar but DR101/14 M544 (GYE 544W). Bova BOV594 (HDZ 8354) and Leyland Tiger STL10 (BAZ 7384) have passed to Colchester, Metrobus M782 (KYV 782X) back to London North and DAF DI928 (J928 CYL) to Ripley, Carlton (dealer) for scrap after fire damage.

Arriva Fox County AA (Midland Fox)

Delivery of the fleet of 38 new double-deckers continues, with further Northern Counties Palatine I-bodied Volvo Olympians as 4644/7/9/51/3 (S644 KJU etc). This impressive investment will renew a fifth of the double-decker stock here at a stroke.

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander Sprint B23F M458 JPA is an acquisition from Arriva Guildford & West Surrey.

Arriva Kent & Sussex AA (Maidstone & District)

Dennis Dart/Northern Counties Paladin 3132 (L132 YVK) is again on loan from Kent Thameside. Volvo Olympian 5918 (M918 MKM) is the first of its type permanently based on the Isle of Sheppey, to work shopping special services. Leyland Tiger 2200 (TSU 644) and Leyland Fleetline open-topper 6666 (THX 291S) have been withdrawn for disposal.

Peculiarly perhaps, vehicles in the much praised '1997' M&D livery appear to be being first to be repainted out of green/cream and into the increasingly ubiquitous Arriva turquoise. Other vehicles have the older style, some over seven years without repaint (eg 1204, 3166, 5112, 5831/69/78/82). Bristol VR 5116 in particular having not been painted since November 1990.

New Enterprise Leyland Tiger 2181 (NTK 611) has been withdrawn and sold to Wealden PSV, Five Oak Green.

Arriva London North AA (Leaside Buses)

Inter-company transfers see the arrival of Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 B40F LDR22-25 (P822-5 RWU) from London South in return for Dennis Darts DRL49-52 (K549-52 ORH) mentioned last month.

Body type

A	Articulated
B	Single-deck bus
C	Coach
DP	Dual purpose, usually coach seats/bus shell
H	Double-decker
L	Lowbridge double-decker (ie with side sunken gangway upstairs. All other types, with conventional gangways are H [Highbridge] regardless of overall height)
O	Open-top
CO	Convertible open-top

Seating capacity

(For double-deckers this is shown with the upper-deck capacity first, eg 43/30, indicating 43 'over' 30. Where these are not known a total figure is given).

Door position

F	Front
R	Rear
C	Centre
D	Dual doors

When platform doors are fitted where these would not normally figure, usually on rear entrance buses, this is indicated by D after the door position. The letter 't' after the door indicates the provision of a toilet whilst L after the door position shows that a wheelchair lift is fitted.

Re-registrations

Where a vehicle is re-registered its previous registration numbers follow in italic type, with the most recent given first where it has been registered more than once.

Vehicle reports should be sent to

J. G. Lidstone, 76 Thames Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 2XD.

Please mark your envelope 'Fleet News'.



DAF DB250LF/Alexander ALX400 DLA2 (S202 JUA) is due to be at Wood Green by now, initially for driver type trainer. DLA1 has been busy at Clapton on driver training in readiness for the conversion of service 242, due to take place during November.

Arriva London North East AA
(Grey Green)

Fifteen 10.2m dual-door Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200s are due for service 78, with 10 Alexander ALX400-bodied DAF DB250LFs due next year for service 168. The 13 Volvo saloons made surplus from the 210 and five Darts from 225 are expected to be offered to other Arriva fleets. The Barking coach unit is being closed down after withdrawal of its coaches.

Arriva London South AA
(South London)

Inter-company transfers see the departure of Dennis Dart SLFs LDR22-25 (P822-5 RWU) to London North, in exchange for Plaxton -bodied Dennis Darts DRL49-52 noted last month.

Arriva Midland AA
(Midland Red North)

New Plaxton Pointer 2-bodied Dennis Darts are reported on order for services D53/D63, 449 (Oswestry-Ellesmere), with a single SPD. Just three Leyland Olympians and a lone Bristol VRT/SL3 is now the double-deck contingent at Oswestry following the transfer of Olympians 1905/6 (EEH 905/6Y) to Cannock.

Arriva North East AA
(United/Tees & District/Teesside Motor Services)

Delivery of new Plaxton Prestige B45F-bodied DAF DE02GSSB220s is under way with Teesside receiving 4041-9 (S341-9 KHN), Tees & District 4050-4 (S350-4 KHN) and Durham County receiving 4055-8 (S355-8 KHN). 4044-6 were initially on loan to Tees pending delivery of its new examples.

Arriva Northumbria AA

Optare Excel demonstrator R98 UUA has been on loan at Jesmond.

Arriva North West AA
(North Western)

Another Arriva group heritage vehicle sold is former Crosville Bristol LD6G/ECW 881 (838 AFM), having been used for a time on local sightseeing work. It has passed to Crosville Heritage of Anston.

Arriva Southend AA

Another manual-gearbox Iveco 59.12/Marshall B25F from East Herts & Essex is 429 (M729 UTW), received in cream/dark green but repainted in Arriva livery before use. The last Leyland National, DAF-engined and rebuilt 745 (PJ1 3745) finally bowed out in October and is expected to follow its sisters to Supreme Coach & Travel, Hadleigh, for use on schools contracts. Ex-Colchester Leyland National 2 26 (EON 826V) was also towed to Supreme for renovation for service use; this had not been used by Southend, but had been stored as a source of spare parts since withdrawal at Colchester.

Reflecting the new parent company, a complete fleet renumbering into The Shires numbering system is due in January; advance details are as follows: Dennis Lance/Wright 001-4 (M761-4 JPA) become 3371-4 Dennis Dart SLF/Wright 017/8 (P417/8 HVX) become 3407/8 Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton 056-067 (P256-67 FPK) become 3376-87 Iveco 59.12 429 (M729 UTW) becomes 2359, 439/40 (N739/40 AVW) are omitted, but will logically become 2349/50 Mercedes-Benz 711D 478/81/2 (P478 DPE etc) become 2378/81/2 Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814 453/4 (R953/4 VPU) become 2373/4 DAF-engined Leyland National 10351/1R 745 (PJ1 3745) was allocated 3306 but has been withdrawn before the scheme comes into force Leyland Tiger/Plaxton 553/63 (A141/24 EPA) becomes 4311/04, 557-9 (B83-85 SWX) become 4313-5 Leyland Tiger/Duple 546-9/51 (A246-9 SVW, B100 XTW) become 4306-9/11 Volvo B10M/Plaxton 565-72 (H845 AHS, H566/7 MPD, H372 PHK, F425/67, 523 UVW, F572 UPB) become 4333/1/2/0-26-9 Daimler Fleetline/Northern Counties 212 (JTD 392P) becomes 5302 Leyland Fleetline/Northern Counties 221-42 (XTE 221-30V, MRJ 231-42W) become 5321-42 Daimler Fleetline/Northern Counties rebodies 250-4 (Q475/6, 552-4 MEV) become 5345-7/3/4 Leyland Olympian/ECW DP 256 (A110 FDL) becomes 5374 Leyland Olympian/ECW 257-60 (B185/9/3/4 BLG) become 5377/8/5/6 and 281-4 (MUH 281/5/3/6X) become 5371/5/3/6 Leyland Olympian/Leyland 262-5 (H262-5 GEV) are omitted Leyland Olympian/Alexander 902-6/9 (F572 SMG etc) become 5382-6/92 Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 705-9 (N705-9 TPK) become 5395-9 Special events AEC Regent III 594 (KTF 594) is also omitted. The dormant company Luton Bus Ltd has been renamed Southend Transport Ltd in order to protect Arriva's rights to use that name. Just to show how complex company ownership has now become, Arriva Southend is controlled by The Shires, but is legally owned by Arriva Croydon & North Surrey Ltd, in turn owned by Londonlinks Buses Ltd, which is owned by Arriva Kent Thameside Ltd — in turn owned by Proudmutual Transport Group Ltd which (nearly there!) is owned by British Bus PLC (46%), Fickling Investments Ltd (27%) and Kennan Investments Ltd (27%) — of which Arriva plc is the parent company.

Arriva Yorkshire AA
(West Riding)

Recent Alexander-bodied DAF DE02GSSB220s 441-3/5-7 (R441 KWT etc) are based at Selby, 448-61 (R448-61 KWT) at Dewsbury and 462-71 (R462-71 KWT) at Belle Isle. Optare MetroRider 707 (H707 UNW) is now reallocated to Pontefract from Heckmondwike. Early Leyland Lynx 252 (C920 FMP) is now withdrawn from passenger service and is in use as a driver trainer at Belle Isle. Leyland Olympians 508/10/2/4/5/8-20/40 (CWR 508/10/2/4/5/8-20Y, EWW 540Y) have been withdrawn, whilst 560 (A560 KWW) is being cannibalised at Belle Isle. Olympians 518/9 (CWR 518/9Y) are now with Scotland West, previously-withdrawn Optare MetroRiders 715/8/9/21-4/6-9 (J715/8/9/21/2 CUM, K723/4/6-9 HUG) passing to Arriva Cymru.

Aston Express, Thurcroft

MCW Metroriders E643 KYW, F439 CJK (416 DCD, F816 CWJ), F438 CJK (417 DCD, F817 DWG) and F562/3 HPP have all been withdrawn and sold to Houston Ramm, Sudden (dealer).

Barnsley & District YT

Five ex-Nottingham Leyland National 2s are now in stock (thought from the B713-9 LAL batch of NL116TL11A/1R/B50F batch).

The Big Bus Company, London SW17

Leyland Titan KYV 507X is now in stock, as a single-door open-topper, whilst OHV 792Y is also now converted to open-top. Surprisingly perhaps, two further Fleetlines are also acquired, well-travelled Daimler Fleetline GHV 29N and Leyland Fleetline OJD 389R both now being open-top. AEC Routemaster RM236 (LDS 236A, VLT 272), properly RM272, is reported as closed-top, although it is believed now converted to open-top.

Bigfoot Buses

Acquisitions are Leyland National 10351A/1R/B41F 404 (UPB 306S), DAF SB220LT550/Ikarus B49F 701 (M848 RCP) and SB220LC550/Ikarus B48F 702 (J53 GCX). Leyland National 405 (PJ1 3671) now sports a new livery of yellow with mid-blue skirt, window surrounds and roof pod, with 'Big Foot' fleetname carried on its front. Leyland Nationals NOC 609R and JUB 645V are being cannibalised for spares. The business passed to Ambergmile Group in September.

Blackpool Transport

New deliveries are 505-7 (S505-7 LHG), B25F Optare MetroRiders. They are the first of an order for 14, to be 505-18 (S505-18 LHG), and are in a reversed HandyBus livery, predominantly yellow with a black skirt. The next four were expected in late-October. Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer SPD demonstrator R739 TMO has been on trial and used on service 26 (South Pier-Marton-Town Centre). Optare demonstrator P447 SWX has been on extended loan. Optare Excels 201-8 (N201-8 LCK), which were the first of their type to enter service, are to be replaced by new, larger Excels. Former Fylde Leyland Atlantean 495 (RHG 95T) has been bodily overhauled and returned to Squires Gate, losing its Northern Counties-style front dash as per 478 (HRN 98N) previously. Phoenix North West stock now operating in Blackpool's distinctive HandyBus yellow and black livery comprises Mercedes-Benz 709D/Dormobile B29F 801-4/6/10 (H611-3 CGG, K804 SFP, K106 RNS, L257 VSU), similar but B27F 807/8 (L808 YBC, J608 KGB) and Vario O.810/Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F 814-8 (R814-6 LFV, R107/8 GNW).

Black Prince Buses, Morley

The headlong rush to have the first 'S-plate' vehicle in service struck here, too, with Mercedes-Benz/Optare Prisma S902 DUB appearing in use at midnight on 31 July/1 August. Newport Transport is again a source for acquisitions, this time single-deckers in the shape of Scania BR112DH/Wadham Stringer B42F 14, 15 (RUH 14, 15Y), in Leeds Suburban Buses service retaining Newport livery. Optare MetroRider 168 (K168 FYG) has been withdrawn and is now with Carter of East Bergholt. The cannibalised remains of Scania-MCW Metropolitan KJD 241P have passed to Wigley, Carlton (dealer), whilst the first of the fleet of 20 Scania double-deckers from Newport to be retired is 83 (JBO 83W), which came off the road in July and is now under cannibalisation. Plaxton-bodied Dennis Dart SLF R438 FTU has returned to Dawson Rentals (dealer) off-loan.

Bluebird, Moston

New SLF/Plaxton Pointer R438 FTU is another at work here. Former Greater Manchester Leyland Leopard/Duple Viceroy C49F TXJ 540K is now in stock for preservation.

Blue Triangle, Rainham

Another ex-Mainline MCW Metrobus added to stock is DR102/53/MCW DPH42/28F C953 LWJ.

Boons, Boreham

Setra S250 Special/C48Ft S268 BTL is new here and Van Hool Alizée-bodied Scania K113TRB K11 BOO has been sold, along with Setra Rational GSU 379.

Group codes	
AA	— Arriva Passenger Services
BL	— Blazefield Holdings
EY	— EYMS Group
FG	— FirstGroup
GA	— Go-Ahead Group
MT	— MTL Holdings
NX	— National Express
ST	— Stagecoach Holdings
YT	— Yorkshire Traction



Opposite:
Eagre of Gainsborough is running this former Ipswich East Lancs-bodied Dennis Falcon on a Gainsborough town service.
ROY MARSHALL

Left:
East Yorkshire has been receiving a batch of Northern Counties-bodied Volvo Olympians, some in traditional dark blue and primrose livery for the Longhill service. 626 (S626 MKH) is seen here.
DAVID LONGBOTTOM

Brighton & Hove GA

Dennis Lance 101 (N401 MPN) is now in standard red livery ex-Metro Line 1 burgundy. Bristol VRT/SL3 693 (EAP 993V) has passed to Cooper Barnes, Shoreham-by-Sea for scrap after cannibalisation. Leyland Atlantean 801/71/10/1/5/7 (TYJ 1S etc) passed to PVS, Barnsley (dealer). 804 (TYJ 4S) to North Birmingham Buses, Erdington where it now carries Blackpool-style cream/green livery. 805 (TYJ 5S) passing to Cramlington, Tyne & Wear. 809 (TYJ 9S) also to North Birmingham Buses, but moving on to Black Country Excursions.

Browns, Builth

Former Oxford Bus Company DAF MB230LT615/Plaxton Paramount III C53F B133 YUD is an acquisition here.

Burtens, Haverhill

New deliveries are of Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton Premiere 3500 C53Ft S10, 20 BCL whilst an acquisition is of B10M-60/Plaxton Excabur C50F L925 NWW from Wallace Arnold, the latter now reported apparently upgraded as C49Ft with toilet.

Bova Futura XSU 913 (A513 HBC) has been withdrawn and sold to Embling, Guyhirn and re-registered PIL 5405; Duple-bodied B10M F464 SJD has gone to Viceroy of Saffron Walden.

Cambridge Pullman

Bristol RELH6G/ECW SVF 896G has been stood down from service and placed in store. Ex-Great Yarmouth ECW-bodied AEC Swift WEX 686M has been sold for scrap, but parts have apparently been rescued for the benefit of sister WEX 685M.

Cardiff Bus

A surprise addition to stock is Volvo B55-10 MkIII/Alexander H44/37F 455 (A967 YSX) from Fife Scottish. Others of its batch (867-74) are expected to follow. By contrast, further Leyland Olympians withdrawn are 501/6-8/11/3 (LBO 501X, RBO 506-8Y, A511/3 VKG), all sold to Munden, Bristol (dealer). Bristol LHS6L/ECW ex-104 (LUH 104P) has been recently noted converted as a mobile caravan at Warren Farm, Overton, Hants in a green colour.

Cedric, Wivenhoe

Cedric now provides the Colchester United FC team coach, for which contract 'Millennium' Setra S250 P200 OMT is employed. Leyland Olympian coaches B109 LPH and B162 AKH are now used on private charter and contract work only, with indicator blinds removed.

Chalkwell, Sittingbourne

Now in stock are Volvo B10M-61/Caetano Algarve H C53F C347 SGD, B10M-61/Plaxton Paramount 3500 C53F E805 DPN and Toyota Coaster HDB30R/Caetano Optimo C18F H388 CFT, all ex-Eastbourne Buses. VIB 9308 has been sold to Essex Buses for driver training work.

Chambers, Bures

Mercedes-Benz 811D/Optare StarRider K936 GWR is now in stock. Former Plymouth Dodge D176 LTA has been withdrawn.

Clintona, Brentwood

Abandoned former Arriva East Herts & Essex services in the Loughton and Epping areas are apparently being taken up, Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B33F R993 FOO and Iveco 59.12/Marshall B25F R603/4 HKN being noted on such work.

Compass Travel, Stockton

New is Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 S1 MFC.

Cresswell, Evesham

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beaver R70 WGS is in stock; also acquired is 711D/Plaxton C25F L568 WGC (L2 HCT) ex-Hardings of Betchworth.

Crusader, Clacton

Setra S250s delivered are R101-8 HEV.

Cygnets, Darton

An all-over white, unregistered DAF/Optare Delta has been on loan for clearance trials here and a Mercedes-Benz/Optare Prisma demonstrator is expected too. Optare Excel demonstrator R98 HUA is another which has been on loan.

Leyland Leopards 27-29 (BSJ 914/8T, GCS 68V) were withdrawn upon acquisition of three Volvo-engined Leyland Nationals, first to arrive being former Eastern National 11351A/1R/B49F 35 (VNO 731S), followed by similar 34 (CBV 785S) and 33 (UHG 734R), both formerly with Ribble. All three had last worked with Merry Hill, Birmingham. Leopard 15 (LPY 457W) is also thought earmarked for early withdrawal.

Leyland Leopards 27 and 28 have passed to Lough Swilly, Eire and Metrorider 26 has gone to Stephenson's of Rochford (dealer).

East Yorkshire EY

New are Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties Palatine II 622-36 (S622-36 WKH) for Hull, Anlaby Road and several are in traditional indigo and primrose to replace J-HAT-registered vehicles on the former Routemaster 56/56A (Hull Station-Longhill/ASDA) services. They have new-style Bright-Tech 'Powerblind' units featuring electronically-controlled roller blind indicator displays rather than the dot matrix units that have been standard for the past eight years here. A major programme is being started to re-equip all the Olympians purchased between 1990 and 1996 with similar units — 547-52/4-70/2-611 (H547-52 VAT, H154-60 BKH, J561-70 HAT, K572-83 RRH, N584-603 BRH, P604-11 SAT), replacing both dot-matrix units and conventional units as hitherto fitted. 611 was the first to emerge re-equipped. Also, the P-SAT batch is having its side indicator displays uncovered for the first time, being fitted with electronically-set powerblind units also. Their rear displays remain covered though.

Volvo Olympian 585 (N585 BRH) is now in dual-purpose burgundy and cream livery and branded 'Classic Line' for service 121 to Scarborough, after a special scheme for Park & Ride work.

A minor renumbering, presumably to clear the way for further double-decker intakes, sees Bristol VRT open-toppers 636-40 (VDV 136S, DRB 307H, VDV 138-40S) become 836-40. Leyland Atlantean open-toppers 658/9 (CYC 658A, WBN 959L) becoming 858/9. Heritage AEC Regent V 644 (VKH 44) retains its fleetnumber however.

All the open-top fleet donned vast yellow and orange bow ties on plates at the front of their upper decks, to distinguish them from competitors' vehicles! Even drivers were equipped with bow ties — the ones on the vehicles covering the indicator displays completely, thereby causing windscreen boards to carry this information. Thus affected were the VRs and Atlanteans mentioned above, as well as Leyland Titan PD2 202 (202 YTE) and AEC Routemasters 812/6/9 (ALM 65B, CUV 210C, EDS 221A).

New Optare Excels 287-96 are now reported as registered S287-96 RAG, of which 290-2 are dedicated to Park & Ride service 700, the balance at Hesse.

Former Kingstonian Volvo B10M/Plaxton Paramount 148 (1918 KH) is now named *Winifred Holtby* to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of this famous local author. Following the withdrawal of Leyland Leopard 188, the last coach to carry the Connor & Graham name, Plaxton Paramount-bodied Leyland Tiger 81 (FAX 2781) was named in honour of the late Mrs Marjorie Graham — I apologise to Mr Graham for the unfortunate error previously reported regarding this naming.

The remaining Mercedes-Benz L608Ds 406-19 (C406-19 VVN) have all been withdrawn, but 414 is now converted as a service van, sister 415 equally but with its rear section lopped in order to act as a pick-up. 407 has been reinstated for a short period at Hull. Other withdrawals are of Bristol VRT/SL3s 502-10/8, 710/64/88, 975/9/85/7 (JKH 502-10V, PAG 518V, PUF 591R, HUP 764T, LAK 938V, WAG 975S, RTH 928S, EKH 985/7T), VRT/SL2 884 (PHE 814M), Leyland Tigers 51, 53 (334 EYL, 546 EYB) and Leyland Leopards 188/9/92/6/7 and 208/32 (OBT 693M, CPT 822S, JKH 192V, YOI 7898, EGR 571S, XAG 208X, PNW 332W). Previously-withdrawn Volvo B58 90 (TND 123X), Mercedes-Benz 811D 214 (G214 RKH), 609Ds 341/2/5 (E101/2 XVM, D905 RVM), VRT 503 (JKH 503V) and Leyland Atlantean 878 (KSA 186P) have all been sold.

Ensignbus, Purfleet

Bus operations of Eastonways have been acquired with vehicles based at three sites on the Isle of Thanet included in the deal. Vehicles numbered are:

Leyland Tiger/Berkhof 296 (BAZ 7296); Leyland National 2 402 (A302 JFA); MCW Metroliner 500-3 (C811 JGR, C163 UHN, C755 CWX, EUI 1587); Leyland Leopards 504-6 (GBZ 7128/9, EUI 1586); Bedford YRQ 507 (VOR 813N); Santos Charisma 508 (HIL 5681); Leyland Nationals 509-12/4-6 (OJD 903R, THX 146S, UFG 62S, YYE 293T, WYJ 164S, YCD 78, 88T); Leyland National 2 517 (BYW 376V); Iveco 49.10 520/1/4-6 (J431 PPF, G402 DPD, D39 DNH, E306 FYJ, F586 OOU); Ford Transit 527 (K165 VFJ); VW LT55/Optare CityPacer 528 (E998 SWT); Ford Transit 830 (L830 MJN). Leyland Titans T64 (LIL 2515, WYV 64T) and T162 (CUL 162V) were placed straight into sales stock and have passed to Hams Travel along with T312 (GYE 312W).

Of these, only Tiger 296, Leyland National 2 402 and Transit 874 are to be retained. The others are to be withdrawn as soon as replacement MCW Metrobuses and Leyland National 2s become available. First acquisitions of the latter are former AA Buses Leyland National 2s 406/12/32/71 (A306 YSJ, C112 GSJ, LSD 732W, LSJ 871W), all initially delicensed at Ramsgate, whilst FSD 687V, JSD 595W and USJ 491Y were placed in sales stock. Acquisitions for Ashford are Volvo B10M/Plaxton Paramount 113s 244/50/2/6/81/2/4 (H544 DVM, H950/2/6 DRJ, H281/2 NRF, H584 VVG).

MCW Metrobuses 172/80 (GOG 272W, ANA 180Y) are now in service at Ramsgate. Metrobuses 301-3 (WYW 61T, GYE 386W, BYX 224V) remain Ensign owned and are operating in Seville.

Farleigh Coaches, Chatham

Daimler Fleetline JGF 410K, Leyland Fleetline OJD 223R, Leyland Atlanteans WFS 288K, VPB 123N, LUG 104P, Bristol VRT/SL3 MAU 145P and Leyland Nationals NOE 591R, NPJ 473R, THX 140S, SAE 758S are all in stock here, along with rare Ward Dalesman TV8-640/Van Hool Alizée C49Ft WOI 4006 (GCP 789Y), DAF SB2300 coaches SIB 3057-9 (F438 RRY, B496 GBD, A332 PNW), MB200 PVV 314 (CAY 215Y), Bedford YMT KEK 134S and Ford R1114 GDT 442V.

LUG 104P, MAU 145P and GDT 442V wear a livery of yellow, red and black in Stagecoach stripes pattern.

Thanks go to Ben Clifton (age 9) for kindly reporting his local current fleet — having noticed we hadn't included Farleigh Coaches previously.

Felix, Stanley

A new delivery is Volvo B10BLE/Alexander ALX300 B45F S590 KJF.

Felix of Stanley has something of a tradition of buying new full-size buses; the latest addition to the fleet, seen in Derby, is Alexander ALX300-bodied Volvo B10BLE S590 KJF. TONY WILSON



Finglands, Rusholme EY

A new midicoach here is Toyota Coaster/Caetano Optimo IV C21F 369 (S369 SND). Further double-deckers added to stock are Leyland Atlantean AN68A/2R/Alexander H49/37F 1757 (AVK 177V) from H&M, Consett (but still in Busways livery), AN68B/1R/Roe H43/30F KPJ 284/GW, EPH 223/9W from Londonlinks being numbered 1759-62 respectively and Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/ECW H45/32F 1758 (JTY 404X) coming from Go-Ahead North East. De-registered Leyland Atlantean 1752 has been sold.

First Badgerline FG

New Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties Palatine II DPH43/29F reported at Weston-Super-Mare are 9688-91 (S688-91 SAE). Leyland National 2s 3510/30/3 (AAE 654V, BOU 5, 8V) have been withdrawn and convertible open-top Bristol VRT/SL3 8601 (RTH 932S) is also due for withdrawal, having its swansong in open-top form recently. It is reported that the exceptionally well presented 1940 Bristol K5G open-topper 8683 (GHT 127) is now rarely used; in recent years, it has often seen regular use on Saturdays at Bath through the season and into the autumn.

First Beeline FG

Further former London DW-class Dennis Darts taken into stock are DW38-41/2, 72/5/6 (JDZ 2338 etc), but DW18, 20, 21 and 33-37 (JDZ 2318 etc) have now moved on again, to Eastern Counties. DW41, 43, 72 and 73 are now stored at Slough. Renault S75 RW46 (HDZ 5446) and Leyland Tiger 768 (TJI 4838, E322 OMG) have been withdrawn. Also withdrawn is the final Alder Valley/Bee Line Mk1 Leyland National 347 (KPA 360P), which very quickly departed for Midland Red West on the day of its withdrawal, where it joins sister 364 (TPE 165S). Volvo-engined Leyland National 2 NL106AL11/1R/DP43F LS470/97 (GUW 470/97W) are now in use as driver trainers in a red and yellow livery.

First Calderline FG

New are Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F 2405-15 (R405 WWR, S406-15 GUB) in Calderline livery though featuring corporate First interior trim. The livery is slightly revised with bands no longer upswept at the rear. Darts 3324-9 have lost branding for the Illingworth service.

First Capital FG

On loan from Thamesway to operate service W9 are Mercedes-Benz 709D/Reeve Burgess 245/6/54/6-8, 394 (F245/6 MVW, F254/6-8 RHK, H394 MAR) and they carry Capital fleetnumbers 565/9/70/66-8. The predominantly red livery is now adopted as standard, the first repaint as such being Leyland Olympian 165 (K888 BWU), the last yellow repaints including Olympians 129/60/2 (J129 YRM, K888 ELR, K888 LAD) and MCW Metrobus 282 (F282 NHJ).

First CentreWest FG

Mercedes-Benz 811Ds MA55 and 69 (F955 BMS, F669 XMS) are now reinstated for further service at Uxbridge. AEC Routemaster RML2405/28 (JJD 405/28D) now have yellow cantrail bands. RML2735 (SMK 735F) journeyed all the way to Aberdeen for the Grampian Centenary Rally recently and was used on services in the Granite City in connection with this.

First CityLine FG

New are Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties Palatine II H43/29F 9665/7-87 (S665 AAE etc), which agreeably feature rear lower saloon windows unlike the previous N-HHY-registered batch. An electronic numeral repeater display is also fitted in this window.

First Eastern Counties FG

Leyland National 2 618 (MDS 868V) is now back in service, but 619 (YFS 301W) has joined withdrawn 621 (MDS 861V) parked up at Lowestoft.

First Eastern National FG

Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 722-6 (R722-6 HHK) are branded Centurion 65 at Colchester, which is the location of former Calderline Volvo Olympians 4301/15 (L301/15 PWR). Latest to arrive are YN2RV18Z4/Northern Counties Palatine I H47/29F 4303/8 (L303/8 PWR) and 4301-5/7/8/15 are now in stock from this batch. Further double-decker purchases are Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/ECW H45/32F 4024/5 (B960 WRN, A147 UDM) ex-Arriva North West and placed into Reserve. Eastern Counties Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 727/8 (R457/8 BNG) have been on loan, whilst former Thamesway Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B40F 987 (N987 EHJ) is now at work in Colchester in full Thamesway livery. Acquired from Thamesway are Dart 9SDL3016/Plaxton Pointer B35F 907-12 (K907-12 CVW), latterly on loan to MTL, also at Colchester as minibus replacements and are fresh in yellow and green EN colours. The displaced minis are going to Chelmsford as replacements for Mercedes-Benz Varios, which are being sold off. Further arrivals from Thamesway are Dart 9SDL3034/Plaxton Pointer B34F 2808/17/9/21/2 (L808 OPU etc), 2808/17/9 at Braintree and 2821/2 at Chelmsford.

Bedford YMT/Plaxton VIJ 9308 is now in stock for driver training, numbered 9020 in the ancillary series. Dual-purpose Leyland Olympians are now absent from Colchester, 4015 moving to Chelmsford and 4016-8 to Clacton and 4021 to Dovercourt; Bristol VRs 3072, 3109 and 3220 are now at Colchester meanwhile! 3220 is the last VR with Leyland 501 engine still at work. Older VR 3026 (WNO 546L) is now undergoing restoration at Rosemary Coaches' premises at King's Lynn, ex-Ludlows of Halesowen. The heritage 45-year old Bristol KSW5G 2383 (WNO 479) successfully completed its tour to Aberdeen and back to its current home at Harwich between 23 August and 4 September. Sadly neglected 2384 (WNO 480) has been sold to a preservationist in south Essex and departed Clacton on tow in early October.

As expected Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814s 421-8 (P701-8 PWC) have passed to First Glasgow. Also withdrawn are the last Leyland Tiger DP, 1001/3/4 (EWR 651/3Y, A660 KUM, Tiger coaches 1130/1 (C130 HJN, EWW 946Y), Leyland National 1833 (VAR 899S), Mercedes-Benz L608D 2232 (C489 BHY) ex-Reserve and Bristol VRT/SL3 3219/21/9 (VTH 941T, WTH 958T, PWY 44W). A sad loss is the newest double-decker coach, ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian 4512 (D512 PPU), first of this small batch to go. It has gone to Stephenson, Rochford. Leyland Nationals 1850 and 1916 (YEV 308S, JHJ 142V) and VR 3226 (DWU 298T) have been relegated to Reserve, 3234 (NUM 339V) finding a home recently at Chelmsford on loan from Reserve. Tigers 1001-4 (EWR 651/2/3Y, A660 KUM) are with Northampton. 1005 (A663 KUM) and Bristol VRT/SL3 9800 (SWW 305R) have gone to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer) for scrap, Tiger 1006 (A665 KUM) and 1131 (EWW 946Y) to Western National, 1130 (C130 HJN) to Eastern Counties.

The Clacton 'graveyard' has been noted recently to contain Mercedes-Benz L608Ds 0233 and 2232, 709D 0260, Leyland Tiger 1004, Bristol VRT/SL3s 3067, 3127, 3219/21/5/33, Leyland Nationals 1803/33/63/96, 1907/16 and recently Mercedes-Benz 709D 334. After several years in preservation, Bristol KSW5G 2379 (WNO 475) has sadly been exported recently after being sold via the Internet. Happier news is that Bristol MW6G coach 337 (284 NHK), for many years the coach allocated to the 'Round the Town' Southend tour, is now in preservation with a new owner in Bournemouth after use by the Sue Ryder Foundation in London.

First Huddersfield FG

Leyland Atlantean 6299 (PUA 299W) has been repainted into standard First Huddersfield livery, having carried Huddersfield Joint Omnibus Committee livery for no less than 15 years now.

First Leeds FG

Six Optare Solos, in corporate livery, are due imminently. Alexander AH-bodied Scania N113DRB 8011 (H611 VNW) has been refurbished with a FirstGroup-style interior by Alexander, with seating capacity reduced from H47/31F to H41/29F. Scania N113CRBs 8654/5 (L654/5 PWR) have had their guide-wheels removed; none of batch 8635-55 (K1 YRL, L636-55 PWR) now being fitted for service on the guideway. Scania saloon 8631 (K631 HUG) is now route-branded for service X32 (Leeds Sheffield) Recent withdrawals have seen the demise of the last of the Atlanteans of batch 6001-40 that were ordered by Leeds City Transport, but delivered to West Yorkshire PTE. The last to go were 6030/8/40 (GUG 557/65/7N). Further news of withdrawals appears under Rider Group, below.

First Leicester FG

Eighteen new Scania L113CRL/Wright Access Ultralaw B40F saloons are now at work in First livery, only 344-6 (R344-6 SUT) being reported so far. Acquired are Volvo B10M/Plaxton 12 (G76 RGG) and un-numbered B10M/Plaxton Premiere N378 EAK, for which further details will be welcome. Former Northampton Volvo Citybus B10M-50/Alexander 282 (F87 DVV) is now re-registered LSU 717.

Group codes	
AA	Arriva Passenger Services
BL	Blazefield Holdings
EY	EYMS Group
FG	FirstGroup
GA	Go-Ahead Group
MT	MTL Holdings
NX	National Express
ST	Stagecoach Holdings
YT	Yorkshire Traction



Eastbourne Buses now has all 12 of its Optare Spectras, which were officially launched on 4 October. All 12 are seen here on that occasion. TERRY S. BLACKMAN

First Mainline FG

New Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer SPDs to B41F capacity are 508/9/13-5/8 (S508 UAK etc). Although low-floor, they are in Mainline livery as they do not feature First Group's corporate interior. Indicator blinds are of the conventional roller-blind type, but are set and changed electronically. Several of these reportedly received damage when first allocated to service 6 owing to ground clearance difficulties over traffic calming measures in Greenland Way.

A revision to the low-floor orders in place from both Mainline and Northern Bus prior to First Group takeover has been effected, such that eight Dart/Plaxton SPDs are due for Greenland Road for services 22/22A (displacing Volvos to services 47/48), 11 SPDs to Rotherham for Maltby services, 12 more to Rotherham and Doncaster for Rossington services; 20 Volvo B10BLEs with Wright bodywork for Greenland Road for service 52 (displacing Volvos to services 47/48). One further SPD is to be taken into stock on loan for a two-year period to make up the vehicle requirement for service 52, along with two spare B10BLEs from the 781-90 batch at Olive Grove.

Delivery of the 20-23 new vehicles expected into stock during next year is to be brought forward, the balance of the 100 due for 1999 following, whilst a further 100 new vehicles are now due in 2000. The influx of over 250 vehicles thereby expected (none expected to be double-deckers) between now and 2000 are intended chiefly to replace the Dennis Dominator and MCW Metrobus double-deckers, with the remaining 50 double-deckers being replaced by 50 mid-life Olympians from other First Group constituent companies.

Renault-Dodge S56 381 (H381 UWB) is reinstated at Rotherham and MCW Metrobuses 1941/3 (B941/3 FET) are similarly now at Olive Grove.

The latest Reserve stock listing shows Renault-Dodges 204/27/9/30/3/42/3/50/2, Metrobus 1859, Dominators 2113/6/21/8/9/88/96, 2318 and Metroriders 3005/8/12, with Leyland Nationals 20, 23, 26, 28, Renault-Dodges 202/19/22/40/5/8, Metrobuses 1858 and 1945 and Dominators 2156/66/78 for disposal.

A revised livery style has become apparent, with Metrobus 1943 appearing without blue and grey bands, thereby comprising yellow with red skirt, upper deck window surrounds and roof, Volvo B10M 622 appearing similarly.

Rider Group's Leyland Atlantean driver trainer 9428 (SUA 140R) has been on loan at Olive Grove to assist with a major recruitment campaign, for which Dennis Dominator trainer 9110 (KKU 114W) has also been active, this still in Northern Bus livery, complete with 3114 fleetnumber plates.

Now withdrawn and transferred to Reserve are Renault-Dodges 339/40, MCW Metrobus 1859, MCW Metroriders 3005/8/12 and Dennis Dominator 2188. 339 has since been reinstated at Doncaster, replacing Renault-Dodge 250, now in Reserve. Leyland Nationals 22, 24 and 25 have been reprieved from disposal and despatched to Yorkshire Travel.

Leyland Nationals 20 and 26 and Dominator 2166 have been withdrawn for disposal, Renault-Dodge 245 and Dominator 2196 being cannibalised prior to scrapping. Leyland Nationals 21, 28 are also reported withdrawn. Other withdrawals are of Dominators 2142/5/71/6/91 and 2233, 2191 and 2233 following engine failures. More dramatically, East Lancs-bodied Dominator 2363 (B363 CDT) caught fire in service and is likely to be withdrawn. If so, it will be the first of the East Lancs Dominators to go.

First Midland Red FG

The substantial fleet of new Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B22F is now complete and in service at Worcester, comprising 501-64 (R501-7 CNP, S508-54, 955, 556-64 RWP). 501-6 made an inaugural appearance on a special Park & Ride service in Worcester for the mid-June 'Car Free Day' but were then stored until the batch was introduced on 1 August. Acquisitions are Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/2RH/Plaxton 3200 C49F 867 (HUA 607Y) ex-Calderline, Mercedes-Benz L608D/Robin Hood B20F 1493/4 (C213/4 HTH) from Brewers along with similar D225/32/5 LCY and Dormobile B20F-bodied D557 FAE from Cymru and Leyland National 11351A/1R/B49F KPA 360P, TPE 165S from Beeline. Some of these are expected only for cannibalisation.

Withdrawn are Leyland Nationals 656/7, 743/6/9/56 (PUK 656R, SOA 657S, XOV 743/6/9T, AFJ 756T) and Mercedes-Benz L608Ds 1309/16/9/22/55/8, 1440-9 (C309/16/9/22/55/8 PNP, C475 BHY, C581-9 SHC) and C208 HTH, D226 LCY with more to follow. The Leyland National is now reduced to just five — 658, 722/52/5/8 (SOA 658S, WOC 722T, XOV 752T, AFJ 755T, XOV 758T).

First Northampton FG

The first minibus conversion since 1988 has affected services 13 and 18/19 (now combined as 18) and 28 as mentioned last month, additionally prompting the arrival of former CentreWest RW-class Renault S75/Wright B28F 707/13 (HDZ 5466/74) from Leicester. Conventional single-deckers have also given assistance, including Volvo/Wright Access Floline demonstrator R460 VOP.

Former Eastern National/Rider Group Leyland Tiger TRBTL11/2R/Duple Dominant (EWR 652/1/3Y, A660 KUM) are now numbered 408-11 and are now B47F. Another acquisition is Volvo B10M-60/Plaxton Paramount 3500 III C49F 11 (G427 PWW) originating from Yorkshire Rider, which entered service in all-over white but is now gold and red with First Northampton Coaches fleetnames.

Former Timeline Alexander-bodied Leyland Tiger 405 (G55 RND) has gone back to Leicester (and is now with Midland Bluebird), being replaced here by twin 401 (F50 ENF).

Perhaps one step further from the recent First Group repainting of nearly-new vehicles into 'Barbie' bus livery is the refitting of 1995 Alexander-bodied Volvo B10Ls 41-43 (N41-43 RRP) with corporate standard interiors, reducing their capacity to B41F from B45F, with more comfortable seating. They now wear First pastel livery, official paint manufacturers' descriptions for which are Off-White, Rubine Red and Reflex Blue.

Withdrawals of the long-lasting 1977/78 batch of Alexander-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3s have resumed, 26 of the 36 having been dispensed with by 1992. Now retired is the last 1977 vehicle, 70 (VVV 70S) along with 52 and 55 (CNH 52, 55T) and thereby leaving 48-50/3/4/7/8 remaining.

Most of the ageing ex-Scottish Leyland Leopard/Alexander Y-type saloons have also been despatched from stock with 21/2/5 (GSO 81V, EGB 50T, GMS 297S) as the latest losses and leaving only 26 (ULS 328T) surviving.

I am grateful to regular Northampton correspondent D. Johnson for these detailed notes.

The new Chilterns and West Anglia Bus Handbook, just published by British Bus Publishing covers this fleet, as well as Stagecoach United Counties and a plethora of other operators in this geographical area. Allocations are now given for major fleets and heritage/some ancillary stock is also now shown. Readers are recommended to this series, this new Handbook being available at £12.50. Orders by credit card can be faxed on 01952 255669 direct to British Bus Publishing, which kindly supports Fleet News.

First PMT FG

Bristol VRT/SL3/501s DVL710/7/27 (GRF 710/7V, NEH 727W) mentioned in *Buses* October as withdrawn were notably the last Leyland 501-engined examples remaining in stock, this operator having standardised on this version of the VRT/SL3 rather than the Gardner product.

First Provincial FG

Unique ACE Cougar/Wadham Stringer 600 (H523 CTR) has been rebuilt at Hoeford and completely repainted and repainted in the process. Dennis Dart/UVG UrbanStar 601 (N601 EPB) has also been rebuilt with framing and roof strengthened, new panelling with plain valences fitted (to replace ribbed UVG valences) and black rubbing strips fitted. The slightly precarious roof-mounted direction indicators have been removed as have the wheeltrims.

The second Dodge driver trainer acquired is now in use as such as 967 (B631 XOW) in red and cream livery as applied to sister 966 (D562 HPC).

The last new Dennis Dart SLF repainted into First livery was 614 (R614 YCR).

As with Stagecoach South, (qv), a substantial special operation was mounted for the International Festival of the Sea at the end of August. Services were run by Provincial to and from the Alexandra Park and King George VI Playing Fields. Owing to the latest new low-floor saloons not being delivered, brand new Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown B47F 116-9 (S116-9 JTP) from CityBus (Southampton) were borrowed as were Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 B37F 418/25 (R418/25 WPX), all with Provincial drivers, supplementing 608-13/5-20/2 (R608 YCR etc) on this work. For the King George V service, Leyland Nationals 3-7, 12/7, 29 and 405/9/11/6/9/20 (PCG 920M, JBP 129P, RUF 37R, WFX 257S, MDS 857V, WAS 766V, YFS 306W, AST 156W, SVX 534W, UWV 66V) were used. Preserved Leyland National 13 (HOR 413L) was borrowed back, given cream First fleetnames at front and rear, numbered 1017 and used on Park & Ride in the mornings and interestingly, ordinary service in the afternoons!

South Wales provided Leyland Tigers 124-6/53/80 (NIL 2455/6/4, WSV 410, NIL 2450), DAF MB200 189 (LIL 5069), MB230 190 (LIL 5070), Volvo B10M-60s 196/8 (H326 DTR, PSU 626) and B10M-61 197 (GSU 388), Bristol sending in Bristol VRT/SL3s 5529/44/58 (DHW 351W, EWS 752W, STW 31W) and Leyland Olympians 8656, 8857 and 9540 (A756/7 VAF, NTC 139V). Further coaches on loan were Bova Futura BXL 840 (A865 XOP), Leyland Leopards 332 DCY, FDC 109, LXI 4409 (GLS 949V, JLS 726S, RDL 307X), Volvo B58-61 EHW 295W and Scania K93CRB G706 LKW, all from Talbot & Carmichael, Bova Futura K807 EET coming from Priory of Gosport and AEC Reliance MBU 534L from Jerome of Petersfield. Choice hiring was perhaps rare 7ft 6ins-wide ex-Warrington Leyland Titan PD2/40 Special/East Lancs H39/29F BED 730C in full Warrington colours, from Classic Buses of Portsmouth!

Interestingly, Bristol VRT/SL3 506 (UVX 2S) has been on loan to the Hampshire Constabulary for a day for a training exercise.

Leyland Leopard driver trainer 412 (MSO 12W) and Bedford trainer 965 (BDL 65T, TDL 998, XDL 304T) have been withdrawn and sold to PVS, Barnsley (dealer).

First Southampton FG

New arrivals are Volvo B10BLE/Wright B41F 116-9 (S116-9 JTP), carrying the new First Southampton fleetnames, by which this company is now known, instead of First CityBus.

Leyland Atlanteans 190 and 204 (HTR 560P, MCR 204R) have gone to Goodwin, Carlton (dealer) but 124/84 (STK 124T, PCR 307M) are now with Guide Friday.

First Thamesway FG

Eastern National VRT/SL3/501/ECW H43/31F 3222 (BEP 963V) and VRT/SL3/6LXB 3226 (DWU 298T) are now at work in Basildon, Hadleigh's highbridge Olympian 4022 (TPD 105X) also being transferred there, although 4023 remains at HH.

The penultimate Leyland National, repainted 1803 (TJN 502R) was withdrawn and despatched to Eastern National's Clacton 'graveyard' in September, only to return to Hadleigh again in October, following the failure of 1870 (YEV 328S). These are now the last Leyland Nationals in main-fleet stock in Southend, just outlasting Southend Transport's final example (qv).

Preston has repainted Leyland Atlantean 176 (DRN 176Y) in the earlier maroon and cream livery to commemorate its 120th anniversary.

J. WATSON



Leyland National 1845 (WJN 565S) has passed to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer). Volvo B10M-62s 617/8 (N617/8 APU) have surprisingly been withdrawn and are now with Eastern Counties.

First Wessex FG

All fleetnumbers are now prefixed with ‘6’ as refuelling now takes place at Badgerline’s Marlborough Street facility at Bristol.

A new delivery is Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton Expressliner II C49F 6186 (R943 LHT), in National Express Rapide livery.

Volvo B7R/Prima demonstrator R342 EDB has been on loan and used on National Express duplicates and the Airport Shuttle. Volvo B10M-60/Plaxton Expressliner II 6163 (K794 OTC) is now in Rapide livery ex-Flightlink colours.

Volvo B10M-60s 6154/5 (J429/30 GHT) are now withdrawn, with Express Shuttle Bristol/Cardiff-branded Expressliner sisters 6157/8 (J203/4 HWS) due to be withdrawn shortly.

Garnett, Tindale Crescent

Former Kentish Bus Roe-bodied Leyland Atlantean KPJ 265W and former New Enterprise Leyland Tiger/Duple Laser NTK 611 (A181 MKE) are acquisitions from Wealden PSV, Five Oak Green (dealer).

Go North East GA

New for Go Coastline are Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties Palatine II H47/30F 3811-7 (S811-7 FVK), based at South Shields for use on service 527 (Newcastle-Jarrow-South Shields). Also being delivered are eight Optare Solos.

Graham’s, Kelvedon

New is Scania K113/Irizar Century S351 SET.

Grayline, Oxford

VW LT55/Optare CityPacer E512 PWR is being operated in allover white. Bristol VRT/SL2 NRU 308M is also owned.

Guide Friday

The new Volvo B10M double-deckers with East Lancs Pyoneer open-top bodywork in use on *L’Open Tour* in Paris are 119-MJQ-75, 410-MJH-75, 401-MJH-75, 828-MJR-75, 831-MJR-75 and 414-MJH-75 in order of chassis/body numbers (presumed to O51/35F layout). These most notable vehicles are the first brand new purpose-built open-top double-deckers built since the six Weymann-bodied Leyland Titan TD5s for Maidstone & District as long ago as 1939 as its 295-300 (FKO 225-30) and later OT1-6, being withdrawn in 1965.

Managing Director Richard Leadbeater is thanked for news of these interesting vehicles and is congratulated on his pioneering vehicle initiative!

Harrogate & District BL

Recently-acquired Mercedes-Benz 709D/Reeve Burgess 216/7 (G916/7 UPP) are now reported as DP23F.

Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 222/3 (G922/3 WGS) and Leyland Tiger 307 (JIL 2216, A621 ATV) have been withdrawn.

Leyland Swift 204 (G111 VMM) has been sold to Pioneer Coaches of Jersey. Mercedes-Benz 223 (G923 WGS) to Fleetmaster Bus & Coach, Horsham.



December 1998

Hornsby, Ashby

The new Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814s are confirmed as R839/41 WOH.

Hulleys, Baslow

Former Milton Keynes Citybus Mercedes-Benz 711D/Robin Hood B25F E71 NVV is now in stock, numbered 17. Leyland National 21 (D571 VBV) has been withdrawn and sold.

Huntingdon & District BL

Former Stagecoach and Premier Bus Leyland Olympians and Volvo B6s are now undergoing repaint into the popular new livery, 61/2, 71/3 (K711/2 ASC, H651/3 VVV) and 627 (L427 XVV) being amongst the first of each type dealt with. The electronic indicator display on 627 has been replaced by conventional roller blinds.

Isle Coaches, Owston Ferry

Three more Leyland National 2s added to stock are NL116L11/1R/B48F KWA 22/6/9W, whilst another acquisition is Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/2R/Duple Dominant IV Express C53F YPD 126Y.

Islwyn Borough Transport

Welcome news received for this fleet is of the arrival of Dennis Falcon SDA401/Duple Dominant B51F 59 (PJU 90W) and similar but SDA412/Duple B52F 60/1/3 (A95/4/6 FRY) from Thamesdown. Earlier SDA406/Duple B52F XJF 91/3Y have also been purchased as a source of spares. Leyland Leopard/Plaxton C53F 01 (MAP 340W) is in stock ex-Cyril Evans of Senghenydd.

Willowbrook-bodied Leyland Leopards 1, 5, 7, 21 and 25 (LBO 728-30P, UDW 939S, OAX 974M) have been withdrawn and scrapped, previously-withdrawn Marshall-bodied Leopard 14 (YDW 565T) also being scrapped.

Johnson, Goxhill

Current operational stock comprises Bedford YRT/Plaxton C49F ARB 527T, YRT/Duple C53F HAX 6W, Leyland Leopard/Plaxton C53F LUA 251V and Leyland Tiger/Plaxton C53F B496 UNB and C329 PEW.

Bedford YRT/Duple WSV 519, YRT/Willowbrook BCS 853T and Freight Rover Sherpa D956 WTH have been withdrawn.

Keighley & District BL

Leyland Olympian ONTL11/1R/Roe H43/29F 939 (A139 DPE) has returned. It was previously numbered 978 here. New Volvo B10BLE 530 (R530 TWR) is now named *Andromeda*.

The new livery applied to Leyland Olympian 968 features Omega Blue, with route branding in red; trimmed with black window surrounds. Olympian 389 now carries a similar scheme, but with Keighley & District lettering in black and no route branding. The last vehicles with grey relief, Olympians 350/70, are now repainted with blue.

Leyland Tiger 231 (G431 MWU) has been withdrawn and transferred south to another Blazefield fleet.

Kimes, Folkingham

Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Fleetline SJI 6567 (*YVN 5157*) hit the national news when it was derooft at Springfield Road railway bridge in Grantham in early October.

Kinchbus, Barrow-upon-Soar

New is Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 S285 UAL (see also under Trent Buses notes). Leyland National 2s RSG 822V and PNW 600W are now withdrawn, as are Willowbrook Warrior-rebodied Leyland Leopards HIL 7771/3.

Leon, Finningley

Two new Optare MetroRiders are reported due, to replace Mercedes-Benz minis 109/10 (D734/6 PWF).

Another former Stagecoach Manchester Leyland Atlantean AN68D/1R/Northern Counties H43/32F is 147 (A734 NNA); a former non-psv — and a youthful one at that — is Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 150 (P887 RWR), latterly in use at Manchester Airport, now seated as B37F (in place of luggage racks).

Wartime utility standards have reappeared here, with Leyland Fleetlines 123/4 (NOC 435/65R) now fitted with wooden slatted seating in their upper saloons for use on schools work!

Leyland Leopard 108 (MPL 135W), Leyland Atlantean 121 (NAK 322R) and Leyland Fleetline 125 (NOC 391R) have been withdrawn and the cannibalised remains of Daimler Fleetline 111 (PRG 500R) have been sold for scrap.

Leven Valley, Great Ayton

A new 33-seater midi with Midland Coach Concepts body is now on order, to be named *Resolution*. All future new buses are to be low floor.

The current fleet comprises Mercedes-Benz 709D/Dormobile B29F L923 UGA *St Columba*; 609D/Alexander AM B29F M677 JFP *St Bede*; 711D/LCB DP29F N458 RNR *Sir William Wallace*, sisters P766 BJU *St Hilda* and P776 BJU *Endeavour*; 709D/Midland Coach Concepts B29F P788 BJU *St Michael II*; Renault S56/Wadham Stringer B39F E293 PDC *St Aidan* and Renault S56/Northern Counties B25F E86 MHG *Discovery*, the latter being the most recent acquisition, ex-Preston Bus. Renault S56 E293 PDC has now been sold to Eastwoods, Erdington.

Thanks go to Proprietor Paul Thompson of Leven Valley for details of his fleet.

London Central GA

MCW Metrobus DR101/12/MCW H43/28D M273 (BYX 273V) is now in stock from London General.

Leyland Titan T928 (A928 SYE) is now relicensed as a psv again after use as a trainer, but Routemaster trainer RM71 (UFF 380, VLT 71) is now delicensed. Titans T1019/43 (A619/43 THV) were not sold as expected and are in use at New Cross.

Optare MetroRider MRL198 (698 DYE) is now reinstated, but MRL208 (J708 CGK) is withdrawn. MRL193/5, 202 (J693/5, 702 CGK) and Mercedes-Benz 811Ds SR21 and 53 (F921 YWY, F53 CWY) have been sold.

London Coaches (Kent)

New coaches not previously recorded are DAF SB3000/Van Hool C53F R177-80 GNW. AEC Routemaster RM450 (WLT 450) was used on a Medway Council open-top bus tour on a circular route from Rochester Cathedral including Chatham Historic Dockyard and Upnor Castle. It is now repainted in drab unrelieved allover red.

London General GA

MCW Metrobus M273 (BYX 273V) has passed to London Central. Sisters M45, 56, 190/1, 231/61/77/5, 303 (WYW 45, 56T, BYX 190/1, 231/61/77/5, 303V) have all been sold to Ensignbus, Purfleet (dealer).

London Traveller, Neasden

Leyland Nationals numbered are 700-2/3/5 (TEL 490R, UPB 352S, YPL 442T, KPA 379P, YPF 765T) which are painted white with dark blue skirts upswept at the rear. Further acquisitions are MCW Metrobus DR102/21/MCW H43/30F 101/2/3/5 (MRJ 47W, ORJ 76/7W, SND 145X) from Stagecoach Manchester and Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1RH/ECW H42/26D 200-2 (C100/1 CHM, D138 DYM) recently discarded rather soon by London Central.

London United/Westlink

An amusing variation of the promotional slogans used here for service 281 is on Volvo Olympian VA40 reading ‘Who’s making sure you’re being served?’ — Mr Humphrey’ — referring to London United’s Managing Director, but no doubt ringing a bell or two with the general public *vis à vis* BBC TV’s comedy programme *Are you being served?* (*not to mention other local bus companies which claim to be ‘serving’ the area!* — Ed) The DP class is being route-branded for service R70 on which they work, too, but in the more conventional way.

Now withdrawn are MCW Metrobuses M8, 15, 19, 28, 34, 44, (WYW 8T etc), 112/31/46/79/87/95, 223/7 (BYX 112V etc), 363, 462, 554/92 (GYE 363W etc), 685 (KYV 685X), 832/6 (OJD 832/6Y), 920/32 (A920/32 SUL), 972 (A972 SYF), 1012 (A712 THV). M34 has passed to White Rose, Staines and M685 and 972 to Billingshurst Coaches, West Sussex.

Ludlows, Halesowen

New, but not previously reported, are Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B39F R562 XOM and P878 POW, both used on service 202.

Magpie, High Wycombe

Mercedes-Benz 814Ds K5 JFS and L334/45 HFU have received Green Line livery for use on service 290, the latter pair at the rear end only (with the rest allover white). All carry Magpie Travel fleetnames.

Group codes

- AA — Arriva Passenger Services
- BL — Blazefield Holdings
- EY — EYMS Group
- FG — FirstGroup
- GA — Go-Ahead Group
- MT — MTL Holdings
- NX — National Express
- ST — Stagecoach Holdings
- YT — Yorkshire Traction

Silcox of Pembroke Dock has recently ended 56 years of double-deck operation. Its ex-Greater Manchester Leyland Titan, GNF 13V, has passed to Swansea-area operator Gemini Travel. T. S. POWELL

Metrobus, Orpington

The last of the Volvo Olympians, East Lancs Pioneer H47/25D-bodied 856 (S856 DGX) was formally handed over at Showbus on 27 September. Other deliveries to complete the batch, for LT service 119, are 846/9-52/4/5/7/8 (S846 DGX etc).

From Arriva West Sussex have come Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander (Belfast) B22FL N468/70 SPA and 709D/Plaxton Beaver B23F N671 TPF whilst Arriva Kent Thameside has provided Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/ECW H45/32F 348 (B248 NVN).

The former **East Surrey** fleet is now renumbered into Metrobus series, viz:

24-26 (F70 RPL, G301 CPL, G972 WPA) are now 909-11; 34/6-8 (J752 PPM, D602 RGJ, D167 TAU) are now 917, 752, 168/7; 45/7-9 (K488 XPG, L726 DPG, L735 MWW, L354 PPF) are now 730/56, 918, 754; 50/1/3/6-9 (M150/1 HPL, M153 LPL, H840 GDY, H908 DTP, R58 GNV, N259 PJR) are now 750/1, 953, 727/9/58/9; 60-68 (N260/1 PJR, K831/2 SFT, F41 CWY, H841 GDY, F31 CWY, H161/5 WWT) are now 760/1/31/2, 908, 728, 907/13/5; 223-9 (J223-9 HGY) are now 733-9. H152 UUA and H163/72 WWT are now numbered 912/4/6 respectively and P895 PWW is numbered 757. 32 (OHV 208Y), 54 (E407 EPE) and 251/2 (J51, 52 · SNY) are withdrawn.

Metroline

An amazing order for 433 new Dennis chassis has been placed for delivery over the next four years. Sixty-five Plaxton President-bodied Dennis Tridents ordered by MTL will be received here and the 16 Tridents ordered by Metroline are included in the 433.

The third RML to receive RM-type non-opening upper deck front windows is RML883 (KFF 276, WLT 883).

Metroline London Northern

New are 9.4m Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall Capital B32F DMS21-29 (S521-9 KFL), prompting the delicensing of Optare MetroRiders MRL210/4/6/8/20 (J210 BWU etc), Mercedes-Benz 811Ds MW27, 28, 30 (NDZ 7927/8/30) and SR112/4 (G112/4 KUB).

MCW Metrobus M101 (BYX 101V) is now under cannibalisation at Potters Bar and M25, 42, 72/9-81, 92 (WYW 25T etc), 108/45/61 (BYX 108/45/61V), 377, 501/63/5/76/9 (GYE 377W etc), 616 (KYO 616X) are all withdrawn at Hatfield.

MK Metro BL

New are Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F 117-21 (R117-9 DNV, R120/1 NVV). The last Bristol VRT/SL3 in service was 259 (MEL 559P).

Motts Travel, Aylesbury

Former Oxford Tube Volvo B10M/Jonckheere Deauville C49Ft L214 GJO is now at work.

The last two Fleetlines active are former West Midlands KON 323P and former London DMS-class B20 OJD 463R. Duple Dominant bus-bodied Leyland Leopard EHS 107T has been withdrawn after engine failure.

MTL North MT

New are Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 7872-9 (S872-9 SNB), originally S572-9 BJA. 7873 is the 6,000th Dart produced and is lettered to this effect.

Mullany's, Watford

Leyland Titans CUL 85V, A896, 986/7 SYE are in stock.

Newport Transport

New Scania L94 18 (S118 TDW) is to B42F layout, with wheelchair provision, unlike its sisters, which are B46F. Wadham Stringer-bodied Scania BR112DHs 10-8 (RUH 10-8Y) have been withdrawn following the arrival of new L94s 10-18 — an unusual example of an exact number-for-number batch replacement. BR112DHs 10, 14-16 and 18 have been snapped up by Black Prince Buses, Morley, an avid collector of Scania's from this fleet in recent times! 17 has gone to Balarus with aid supplies, prior to a scheduled return here before disposal.

NIBS, Wickford

Further late-model Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/ECW H43/31F acquired from the recent clear-out by Cambus/Viscount are VEX 295, 303/4X.

North Surrey Buses

Bristol REL6L/ECW LHT 171L is now in stock, repainted into fleet livery and is in use on schools services 815/825 in the Ripley area.

Nostalgibus, Mitcham

The current fleet comprises Leyland Fleetline/MCW DMS2333 (THX 333S); Guy Special/ECW GS43, 67 (MXX 343/67); Leyland Olympian/Alexander DP LL64, 65 (A316/7 GLV); Olympian/East Lancs DP LW92 (B102 SED); AEC Swift/MCW MBA541 (VLW 541G); Bedford OB/Duple OB5, 86 (KYE 905, ONO 86); AEC Reliance/Plaxton P51 (RHC 51S); AEC Regal IV/MCCW RF136, 522 (MLL 523, 940); rare AEC Regal IV/Park Royal C37C half-deck RFA721/38 (MLL 721/38); AEC Routemaster/Park Royal RM357/78, 1081, 1394, 1571, 2156/80 (YVS 288; WFO 410; 81, 394, 571 CLT; CUJ 156/80C); Routemaster/Park Royal DP RMC1462 (462 CLT); AEC Regent III/Park Royal RT401 (HLX 218) and Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount TPL10 (C377 PCD).

Routemaster RM378 (WFO 410, WLT 378) was delicensed upon cessation of service 306 and RM1081 (81 CLT) is now being cannibalised for spare parts. RM357 (YVS 288, EDS 278A, WLT 357) is now in use as a seat store, AEC Merlin MBA541 (VLW 541G) as a destination blind store (perhaps this could only happen in London!). Others unlicensed for restoration or breaking for spares are GS43, OB86, RF522, RFA721/38 and RT401.

Surrey schools service 518 is now Routemaster-operated. Bedford OB OB5 (KYE 905) is undergoing restoration after damage in last December's fire.

Nottingham City Transport

In addition to the 12 Dennis Tridents on order, a further 16 double-deckers are reported due, along with 18 33-seater midibuses. Due imminently are 10 Optare Solos, the first to be built to the longer, 9.2m, length.

Volvo Citybus 398 (A398 CRA) is now renumbered 346 and sister 399 (A399 CRA) is now 3547. Bova coach 797 (M784 RVY) is now re-registered 77 RTO. Leyland-DAB Lion 382 is now in current green/cream, having lost the so-called 'Harrods' scheme.

Optional Bus, Horsforth

Former Arriva Crawley & East Surrey Leyland Atlanteans numbered and given full livery are 3146/7/51/3/87 (UPK 146/7S, VPA 151/3S, XPG 187T) which are dedicated to new service 44A (Whinmoor-Farsley).

Other vehicles now carrying the new fleet numbering system, based on vehicles' registration numbers are Leyland Nationals 1392, 1766 (YPL 392T, YPF 766T) and Bristol VRT/SL3 2424 (PCA 424V).

Oxford Bus Company GA

Twenty-seven Dennis Trident double-deckers are now on order, to become 101-27, of which 20 will upgrade existing Park & Ride services, the balance of seven being for a new P&R service to be introduced late-summer next year. Also due are 15 Wright-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs for mid-1999 delivery as 801-15, whilst Citylink is to be upgraded by five new Volvo coaches as 14-18, also in mid-1999 (which will replace 59-63). The E-registered Leyland Olympians will then move over to Wycombe Bus stock and only two MCW Metroriders will then be left, for the Jericho service. These new deliveries will then reduce the average vehicle age in mid-1999 to a mere 2.7 years.

MCW Metrorider 778 (G778 WFC) has been withdrawn after a spell on loan to Wycombe Bus and Wycombe-based 703/4 (H189/91 RWF) are now awaiting disposal.

The latest edition of British Bus Publishing's South Central Bus Handbook is now available, covering this and many other neighbouring fleets in this area. Profusely illustrated, many in colour, allocations and some ancillary vehicles are now included for major fleets — as well as the handy registration index at the rear.

Payne, Little Paxton

Former Southdown Leyland Titan PD3/4/Northern Counties 'Queen Mary' BUF 260C has been withdrawn and sold for preservation to a new owner in Worthing.

Phoenix North West, Blackpool

The press report concerning the recent accident involving 807 (L807 YBC) omitted to mention that an armoured security van collided with the side of the bus, causing the rear axle to become detached.

Pioneer, Rochdale

Sadly perhaps, the deliciously unfamiliar Royal Blue lines of ECW-bodied Bristol RELH6G 1468 (RDV 419H) will no longer grace the streets hereabouts as it has now been withdrawn into well-earned retirement preservation with a new owner in Derby.

Pullman Coaches, Chippenham

Former Oxford Dennis Javelin/Plaxton C53F K750/2 UJO are now in stock, K750 UJO placed in service still wearing its Victoria Coach Station advertising livery.

Reading Buses

Another Optare Excel now at work is 921 (R921 SJH).

A further Optare Solo is now added to the order, for the free Hoppa service 205. Also due are a further three Optare Excel saloons for the Thames Valley Park Shuttle.

MCW Metrobus 163 (WRD 163T) has passed to Whiting, Pontefract (dealer) for scrap, cannibalised running units being returned to Reading Buses for spares. Optare CityPacer 223 (E556 GFR) has gone for scrap.

Ford R1114 driver trainer 200 (LAO 846W) has passed to Red & White for continued use in this capacity; training here is now undertaken using Leyland Olympians of the 11-17 (E911-7 DRD) batch.

Reading Mainline news is that former Strathtay AEC Routemaster No.12 (AST 415A, VLT 45) has now been completed in readiness for service and has been despatched to Mainline at Rotherham, rather aptly, for repaint. No.7 (VLT 44) is no longer licensed, having fallen out of use during No.12's lengthy preparation for service since acquisition in 1994.

Further Routemasters exported to Buenos Aires, Argentina (via a New Zealand agent) with minimal attention after periods delicensed are No.9 (WLT 790), No.15 (WVS 423, WLT 999), No.16 (WLT 621) and No.32 (LDS 280A, VLT 104).

Rest & Ride, Smethwick

Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 S194 HOK has been noted in service in all-over white. Also noted has been Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer R660 GCA.

Rider Group FG

Much information on former Rider Group fleets is still being reported under the overall Rider Group title. To avoid making differentiation between fleets which may be inaccurate, or omitting information where this is not certain, this heading will be used temporarily for amalgamated information for First Bradford, First Calderline, First Huddersfield, First Leeds, First York and Quickstep fleets.

Kimes of
Folkingham has
bought three
Leyland Titans from
Oxford Bus
Company.
TAZ 4064 was
formerly Oxford
951 and was
originally London
Transport T516
(KYV 516X).
ROY MARSHALL



Low-height Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Olympian 5152 (F152 XYG) is now refurbished by Mainline at Rotherham with First Group corporate interior, its capacity slightly reduced from H45/29F to H39/24F to provide more legroom.

Withdrawals are of Leyland Atlanteans 6030/8/40 (GUG 557/65/7N), 6118/28/33/4/50/2/93 (LUG 118P, SUA 128/33/4/59R, WNW 152S, JUM 193V) and 6426/8/30/1/3-5/41/2 (KPJ 253/7/61/3/91/2W, MPG 293W, ANA 209T, FVR 166V). These withdrawals see the last of the Atlanteans of batch 6001-40 ordered by Leeds City Transport, but delivered to West Yorkshire PTE. Dennis Dart SLFs 3315/9/22 (P828/32/5 YUM) have passed to First Lowland, whilst Atlanteans 6043, 6127/46, 6423/40 (HWT 29N, SUA 127/46R, UNA 800/34S) and Leyland Fleetline 7088 (JUW 88V) have gone to PVS, Carlton (dealer).

RoadCar YT

New here are Dennis Dart SLF/East Lancs Spryte B39F 507/8 (S507/8 BTL). Another arrival from Yorkshire Traction is Renault S75/Reeve Burgess Beaver B31F 174 (G874 WML).

Disposals are of Dodge S56s 72, 109 (D113 OWG, D309 MHS) to Horner Scrap Metals, Newark (dealer), 79, 82 and 85 (D119/27 OWG, E35 RBO) to J. McParlane, County Down whilst Leyland Leopards 1452/8 (XTL 468X, AVL 747X) and Leyland National 2846 (SWE 434S) have gone to PVS, Barnsley (dealer), Leyland National 2829 (NTV 729M) passing to Barnsley & District.

Rossendale Transport

1986 Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1RH/ECW H42/26D C34, 39, 40, 84/5/8/9, 90, 93 OHM are now in stock from Arriva London South.

Shearings

Further coaches delivered are Volvo B10M-62/Van Hool C46F1 902/3 (R902/3 YBA), B10M-62/Plaxton C50F 924/5 (R924/5 YBA) and B10M-62/Jonckheere C50F 936/47-9 (R936 YNF etc).

Silcox, Pembroke Dock

A new arrival for Grand UK Holidays work is another Dennis Javelin GX/MarcoPolo Explorer II C53F, S224 BDE — more are on order too apparently.

Another former MoD Leyland Tiger into use after refurbishment is 221 (NSV 324) which has Plaxton Derwent DP54F bodywork — the 22nd Tiger to enter service and 10 more are due. 221 takes its registration from Leyland Leopard 24 (NSV 324, *AND 14M*).

Now withdrawn are Leyland Leopards 24, 26 and 136 (NSV 324, 109 CUF, HDE 612N), Volvo B10M-60 106 (A6 WLS), DAF SB2300s 107/11 (A7, 11 WLS), Leyland Titan 31 (GNF 13V) and Leyland Atlantean CWG 707V. As a result 56 years of double-deck use by this operator has come to an end. The Titan is now with Gemini, Birchgrove.

Skills, Nottingham

Mercedes-Benz 814D/Autobus Classique C25F M569 KVL is now in stock, whilst an unusual purchase is of former Gospel, Hucknell Duple-bodied Bedford SB EJC 1 in derelict condition for possible restoration; indeed, Duple-bodied Bedford 6 EBH is now recently restored and similar TUE 132 is in stock, also derelict at present.

Van Hool-bodied Volvos 59 and 67 (TJI 4859, YXI 5860) now wear a special green and white livery for the University of Derby, applied in Skills' house style.

Southern National

Bristol LH6L/Plaxton Supreme III Express 3307 (AFJ 727T) is now in use as a driver trainer, replacing Bedford YRT/Plaxton Elite III 9024 (JFX 232N).

A sizeable number of vehicles is in store at Norton Fitzwarren, comprising:

Ford Transit 190D/Carlyle 452 (B107 XJO) and Robin Hood-bodied 308/12/3/20/2/4, 411 (C870/4/5/82/4/6 DYD, C332 GYJ), sister C333 GYJ from Smiths Coaches, Portland remaining in that livery; Dormobile-bodied 378/87-9/92, 442/6 (C940/9/50/4 GYD, C363/7 GFJ); VE6/Mellor 156/64/8/70/7/8/80/2/8-90 (E206 BDV, E814/08 WDV, E220 BDV, E817 WDV, E198 BDV, E820 WDV, D782 NDV, E218/9 BDV, D643 NOD), of which 164/78/80/8-90 retain Blue Admiral colours, 182 Red Admiral. Sherpa/Carlyle 60, 62 (D404 SGS, D58 TLV) and Carlyle II 64 (G266 GKG), G260 GKG, E158 RNY, F202 YKG are also stored. E158 RNY and F202 YKG still in Smiths livery. Iveco 49.10/Robin Hood 54, 112/7, 220/32, 507/9/11 (D54 ERV, D112/7 DRV, D220/32/29/8 VCD, D509 OTA) and Carlyle II-bodied 523 (F908 FHE) and F909 FHE; Leyland Leopard/Alexander bus 3551/54/5/63-7, 8014 (GMS 280S, YSF 85S, GMS 295S, TSJ 74S, YSF 97, 99S, GMS 291, 310S, PUS 157W); Leopard/Alexander coach 3558/61/2 (PRA 114R, GMS 267/75S).

Accident-damaged Leyland Leopard/Alexander SDV 39N ex-Devon Services of Paignton is in use as a seat store.

Sovereign Bus & Coach BL

Following the closure of North Mymms garage, a new outstation opened at Welwyn Garden City (Burrowfields), to which is allocated Leyland Lynxes 215/40/58/9/96/7 (F205 MBT, E840 EUT, F358/9 JVS, G296/7 KWY); Volvo B6s 606-8 (R606/7 WMJ, R608 CNM); Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 433/4/53/4 (K3, 4 SBC, L953/4 MBH) and Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 902/4-6 (G902 UPP etc).

Other North Mymms vehicles were Leyland Olympians LR37/8 (BPF 137Y, A138 DPE) and 709D 907 (G907 UPP), which transferred to St Albans and Volvo B10Bs 107/8 (N107/8 GVS), Olympian LR66 (B266 LPH) which went to Stevenage. Recently-acquired ex-Keighley & District Leyland Tiger TRCTL10/3ARZA/Plaxton Paramount 3200 III C55F 331 (G431 MWU) is now also based at Stevenage. Stevenage-based Tiger coach TP864 (B264 KPF) is renumbered 364.

The Leyland Olympian which suffered roof damage was correctly LR31 (BPF 131Y) and not H141 GGS. Olympian LR40 (A140 DPE) is at Stevenage and expected to be converted as a driver trainer. Olympian LR39 (A139 DPE) has gone to Keighley & District. Former driver trainer Leyland National 821 (FUG 321T) is in use as a uniform store at Cambridge Coach Services.

Speedlink Airport Services NX

The DAF SB220/Plaxton Prestige R971-89 FNW acquired for Heathrow Fast Train work have been returned from their lease. However some remain at both Heathrow and Gatwick airports with Capital Logistics.

Five Wright Crusader-bodied Volvo B6LEs have been diverted from Travel West Midlands for use on the London Transport service H30 which began in November. They will be replaced by 10.4m Dennis Dart SLFs to LT specification when these can be obtained. Also on order for next year are seven Van Hool T9-bodied DAF SB3000s.

Stagecoach Cambus ST

Volvo B6s 167-9 (L667-9 MFL) now carry a new City Rail Link livery for yellow and red with blue lettering.

Bristol VRT/SL3s 742/53 (VEX 295/89X) have been withdrawn, but 747 (STW 24W) is reinstated for further service. It is one of only eight serviceable vehicles still in blue/white Cambus livery; they are Bristol LH 65 and Bristol VRT/SL3s 737/9/3/5/7/51, of which 737/45/6/51 are licensed, 751 also being the last DP-seated VR here.

Premier Volvo 422 (K912 RGE) is now named *Columbus*, not *Invincible* as intended.

Bristol LH/ECW driver trainer SVL 843R is on loan from United Counties, AEC Reliance/Plaxton 73 (SFL 373R) also being at work on a recruitment and training campaign. The Cambridge Folk Festival brought United Counties Bristol VRT/SL3s 726/38 and 920/1 (LFJ 855W, FDV 835V, LBD 920/1V) on loan, 726 also appearing on Tesco services and 738 on driver training.

Stagecoach Cheltenham District ST

New deliveries are of Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200 B37F 924-30 (S924-30 PDD) as Leyland National replacements. They arrived with registrations S919-25 RAD, but these were changed prior to entering service.

Leyland National 2 374 (BHY 998V) has been on loan to Swindon & District, in exchange for that concern's Leyland Olympian ONLXB/2RZ/Alexander H51/36F 105 (G105 AAD). Leyland National 2s 364/7 (AAE 648/51V) have been on loan to Cheltenham & Gloucester.

Rebuilt Leyland National 312 (TAE 644S) and Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 691/2 and 706 (L691/2 CDD, M706 JDG) have been transferred, 312 and 691 to Cheltenham & Gloucester and 692 and 706 to Swindon & District.

Stagecoach Cheltenham & Gloucester ST

Acquisitions are Leyland National 11351A/1R/B52F 312 (TAE 644S), rebuilt to the company's 'National 3' specification and Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander (Belfast) B25F 691 (L691 CDD) from Cheltenham District, along with Mercedes-Benz 811D/Wright B33F 810 (J416 PRW) and similar but B31F 811 (J417 PRW) from Midland Red South, now based at Stroud.

United Counties Volvo Olympian/Alexander H51/36F 702 (R702 DNH) has been on loan to Cirencester for several weeks' trials on trunk service 51 (Cheltenham-Swindon) in comparison with local Gardner-engined Olympians. 104 (G104 AAD) went to United Counties in exchange. Also on loan here have been Leyland National 2 NL116L11/1R/B52F 364/7 (AAE 648/51V) from Cheltenham District.

Bristol VRT/SL3 229 (EWS 746W) has been withdrawn and sold to Swindon & District.

Stagecoach Circle Line ST

Leyland National NFB 603R has been noted heavily cannibalised at Gloucester.

Stagecoach Cumberland ST

New here are Volvo B10M-62/Jonckheere Modulo 796-8 (S796-8 KRM).

A lone acquisition from Stagecoach Manchester is Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander (Belfast) B25F 97 (N645 VSS), new to Western Buses but which quickly passed to Greater Manchester South.'

Stagecoach East London ST

Further to last month's notes, the week-long North Wales-based operation of service 15 used AEC Routemaster coaches RMC1453/61/90 (453/61/90 CLT) and the last RML, RML2760 (SMK 760F) and open-top Leyland Titan T512 (KYV 612X). Unfortunately, some roof damage was sustained by the vehicles — including otherwise immaculate Green Line-liveried RMC1461 — as the route was not adequately tree-lopped for their operation.

Leyland Titan TNLXB2RR/Leyland H44/24D T529 (KYV 529X) and Dennis Dart 8.5SDL3015/Wright Handibus B29F DW136 (NDZ 3136) are now in stock ex-Selkent, but Titan T1128 (486 CLT) and Darts DRL133/4 (K133/4 SRH) move the opposite way.

Titans T622/3 and 996 (NUW 622/3Y, A996 SYE) are further to migrate north to Fife, T639 (NUW 639Y) stopping off a little earlier with Transit.

Stagecoach East Midland ST

Further details are now to hand of the revamp to the driver training fleet with the arrival of five ex-MoD Dodge Commando G13s with Wadham Stringer B39F bodywork, now downseated to B14F, from Eastwood Commercial of Birmingham. Three are now active, 1023 (D933 TWE) was first, initially based at Chesterfield but now allocated to Worksop where it joins Leyland Leopard/Duple trainer 177 (OJL 822Y), now due for withdrawal. 1024 (D932 TWE) is at Mansfield where it replaced Bedford YMT 1011 (LPT 872T), already stood down after mechanical failure. 1025 (E250 AKU) is now at Chesterfield, where it replaced the recently-acquired Bristol LH6L/ECW B8F 1010 (OCA 640P) from Cleveland Transit and dubbed the 'yellow peril', now sold for preservation. The fourth G13 is due to go to Grimsby-Cleethorpes to replace Ford R1114/Plaxton 259 (BFW 136W) and the fifth is expected to be diverted to Viscount. Chesterfield-based trainers Ford R1114/Duple 1013 (YYL 599X) and Bedford YMT/Plaxton FTO 550V have apparently suffered mechanical problems of late, resulting in the use of Roe-bodied Leyland Olympians 299 and 300 (TWF 201/2Y) for driver training work.

Stagecoach Manchester ST

The ex-Stagecoach Kenya Duple Metsec-bodied Dennis Dragons are now beginning to appear in service; the first five are at Princess Road for Magicbus services. There are to be 20 in total, 680-99 (M680-99 TDB) and they have been resealed from their three-plus-two configuration. Exact capacity is not clear at present, but is understood to be 87 or 88 seats, in standard Stagecoach moquette. Contrary to previous reports they retain their tropical sliding windows, but fixed so as not to open too far. The first three noted in service were 680-2.

MCW Metrobuses 5022/41-3/5/74/7/9/80/94, 5106/11/6/9/24/32/41/60/4/5 (GBU 22V, MRJ 41-3/5W, ORJ 74/7/9, 80, 94W, SND 106/11/6/9/25/32/41X, ANA 160/4/5Y) have passed to Ensignbus, Purfleet (dealer).

Stagecoach Midland Red ST

Acquisitions are Leyland National 2 810-5 (WAS 768V, MSO 18W, NLS 985W, YFS 304W, SHH 393X, RRM 383X), WAS 771V, RFS 579V from Western, now at Leamington Spa (810/1), Stratford-upon-Avon (812/3) and Rugby (814/5). Also acquired are WAS 765V, MSO 14W, NLS 987W, Red & White providing Leyland National MkIs SKG 923S, NOE 572R, Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Atlanteans VBA 166/88S and Alexander-bodied Atlantean 994 (AVK 163R). From Cheltenham & Gloucester comes Mercedes-Benz/PMT 373 (G684 AAD) and from Stagecoach Oxford comes Mercedes-Benz/Reeve Burgess 377 (E829 ATT). Leyland National 597 (HEU 122N) is perhaps a surprising re-acquisition from Circle Line given its age. Former Centro 'EasyRider' Leyland National 1052 (AIB 4053, *THX 186S*) is now reinstated, in standard colours and with 'Flexibus' vinyls for use on accessibility services in the Leamington Spa area. Another reinstated is Mercedes-Benz 811D 412 (J412 PRW) at Stratford-upon-Avon.

Former Vanguard Dennis Lancets 2036/7 are now at Stratford-upon-Avon. Similar 2035 is now in reserve.

Group codes	
AA	— Arriva Passenger Services
BL	— Blazefield Holdings
EY	— EYMS Group
FG	— FirstGroup
GA	— Go-Ahead Group
MT	— MTL Holdings
NX	— National Express
ST	— Stagecoach Holdings
YT	— Yorkshire Traction

Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 401/2/14 (H401/2 MRW, J414 PRW) have been withdrawn and transferred to Red & White at Crosskeys and are expected to be joined by other withdrawn sisters 406/8/11/2/5/6. Former Circle Line/Busways Leyland Atlantean SCN 264S has succumbed to cannibalisation at Stratford-upon-Avon without having entered service. Also withdrawn are Leyland Leopard 11 (FYX 824W) and Leyland Nationals 504/71 (JOX 504P, NOE 571R).

The fleet of Bristol VRT/SL3s was reduced to just ten in early-September — 927-9/40/3-8 (NHU 671R, LHT 725P, NHU 672R, PEU 511R, GTX 754W, HUD 475/80/79S, AET 181T, VTV 170S).

Stagecoach Oxford ST

New deliveries are of the first ten of the Mercedes-Benz Vario 0.814s due, as 371/3-81 (S371 DFC etc) based at Oxford at Witney. Also due are 29 MAN 18.220s with Alexander ALX300 bodywork as 913-41 (S913-41 CFC), these being the first of this type for Stagecoach.

Acquisitions to record are of Leyland Atlantean AN68A/2R/Alexander AL H49/37F 551 (SCN 251S) ex-Busways, which arrived in full Stagecoach colours from Sunderland. It is intended as a reserve vehicle for the Oxford Brookes University Inter-site service, to which Volvo Olympians 514/6 (R414/6 XFC) are allocated. Dennis Dart 9.8SDL3054/Alexander Dash B40F 709/10/2 (N609/10 KGF, N612 LGC) are now in stock from Selkent, but former East London Wright-bodied Dart 8.5SDL3015s DW148-50, due here as 748-50 (NDZ 3148-50) and D9SDL3016 DWL15, 16 (NDZ 3015/6) were still awaited at the end of September.

Mercedes-Benz 709D 308 (E308 BWL) has passed to Midland Red South and not Stagecoach Devon: the more recent carrier of fleetnumber 308 (E829 ATT, formerly 50) is now also with MRS.

Stagecoach Red & White ST

Further new Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200 B37F are 623/7 (S623/7 TDW), whilst arrivals from Midland Red South are Mercedes-Benz 811D/Wright B33F 201/2/8/14 (H401/2 MRW, J408/14 PRW) and from Stagecoach Devon come 811D/Alexander AM B28F 177/9-81/4 (F617/09/20/31/14 XMS).

Good news is that Bristol RESL6/ECW B44F 392 (HTG 354N) is now reinstated for further service; bad news is that sister 393 (GHB 148N) has been withdrawn.

Withdrawals to record here are of MCW Metrorider DP 106 (F106 YWO), bus 252 (F125 YVP), Mercedes-Benz 709D 149 (F392 DHL) and uncommon PMT-bodied coach 709D 301 (H301 PAX), Tiger coaches 909/30/1 (AA5 538, 465/75A, SDW 925/16/23Y) and Dennis Javelin coaches 952-4 (H159 EJU; F243 OFP; HIL 8410, E759 JAY). The Javelins are now with Circle Line, Gloucester.

Dealers have taken previously-withdrawn MCW Metroriders 105/6 and 252 (F105/6 YWO, F125 YVP); Mercedes-Benz 709D 332 (H556 TUG); Leyland Nationals 427/42/9/75/97 (NWO 461R, UTX 726S, DDW 434V, YBO 150T, BYW 397V); Leyland National 2s 504/7/17 (MSO 13W, WAS 767V, DMS 20V); Bristol VRT/SL3s 825/32-4/6/41/3/4 (TWS 909T, CBV 6S, DBV 26W, BUH 232V, GTX 738/48/50/3W) and uncommon Alexander-bodied VRT/LL3 864 (OSR 209R). 832 (CBV 6S) has been re-registered WAX 239S after withdrawal. Metrorider DP 114 (F114 YWO) and DAF-engined Leyland National 663 (PHW 985S) have been sold to unconfirmed buyers too.

Stagecoach Selkent ST

Acquisitions comprise Leyland Titan TNLXB1RF/Park Royal DPH43/29F T1128 (486 CLT) and Dennis Dart 9SDL3024/Plaxton Pointer B34F DRL133/4 (K133/4 SRH), all from East London whilst Dart 9.8SDL/Plaxton Pointer B37D PD101 (M101 BWB) is from Stagecoach Oxford. The comfortable Titan is earmarked to become a driver trainer.

The last day of company operation of service 119 before Metrobus took over was marked by the borrowing of East London's superbly presented showbus RM613 (WLT 613), but unfortunately its use was curtailed when a window was shattered by a flying brick at West Wickham in the evening.

Titan T529 (KYV 529X) and Dart DW136 (NDZ 3136) have passed to East London, Titan T1096 (B96 WUV) to United Counties, T1108 (B108 WUV) to Stagecoach Devon and T1113 (B113 WUV) to Transit.

Stagecoach South Group ST

Very healthy investment in new vehicles has now reduced the average age in this Stagecoach Group to just 6.99 years.

East Kent B10M-62/Plaxton Premiere 8405/6 (M405/6 BFG) are now resealed as C51F1 from C53F. Hants & Surrey Dennis Dart 472 (N312 AMC) now carries the roller-blind indicator display from an earlier Dart with three-track numeral display, with sisters 474/5/82/3 (N314/5/22/3 AMC) expected to follow suit.

Hants & Surrey Leyland National 1201 (HPK 503N) and similar East Kent 1898 (JGG 898P) have been withdrawn for disposal and Hants & Surrey Bristol VRT/SL3 685 (EAP 985V) and Hampshire Bus sister 749 (BKE 849T) have passed to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer) along with East Kent's VR 1115 (MFN 115R).

Stagecoach Swindon & District ST

Acquisitions are Gardner 6LXB-engined Bristol VRT/SL3/680/ECW H43/31F 229 (EWS 746W) from Cheltenham & Gloucester, Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander (Belfast) B25F 692 and 706 (L692 CDD, M706 JDG) from Cheltenham District.

Leyland Olympian ONLXB/2RZ/Alexander H51/36F 105 (G105 AAD) and Leyland National 2

NL116L111R/B52F 374 (BHY 998V) have been on loan from Cheltenham District.

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Reeve Burgess B25F 678 (F311 DET) is now reinstated and was the last vehicle to carry Stagecoach Metro fleetnames, (now carrying standard Swindon & District).

Leyland National 2s 377/8 (RHG 880X, NHH 382W) are now withdrawn.

Stagecoach Transit ST

Former Hull MCW Metrobuses 102/17, 519/21/3, 918 (LAT 512V, SAG 527/19/21/3/18W) have passed to Ensignbus, Purfleet (dealer).

Stagecoach Viscount ST

The last two operational Iveco 59.12s, 954/7 (K174/7 CAV) are now replaced by much older Mercedes-Benz 709D/Reeve Burgess DP25F 2309/11 (E309 BWL, F311 EJO) from Stagecoach Oxford. 954/7 had enjoyed a stay of execution some time longer than expected, 955/6 (K175/6 CAV) being withdrawn in their place and put into store along with Cambus sisters 951-3 (K171-3 CAV).

Viscount Buses livery is now carried solely by Bristol VRT/SL3s 770/3/80/4/91 and the short-lived Peterborough Bus Company livery is now carried by just two VRs, 775/96 (796 now transferred to Cambus and based at Cambridge).

Leyland Lynx 310 (F167 SMT) has lost Cambridge Park & Ride livery after accident damage repairs and is now in standard stripes.

March outstation is now reduced from three double-deckers to just one double-decker and one midibus, Volvo Olympian 540 (P540 EFL) and Optare MetroRider 990 (M810 WWR).

Stephenson, Rochford

The last double-decker coach bought new by Eastern National is now at work here in livery. It is Leyland Olympian ONTL11/2RH Special/ECW CH45/24F D512 PPU, one of the few with the last style of front dash design for this type.

Stringers, Pontefract

Former Shearings Volvo B10M-60/Van Hool C53F CAZ 3190 (H190 DVM) and 63 XMD (H193 DVM) are now at work. 63 XMD was previously carried by Plaxton-bodied Leyland Leopard originally PYG 581R, now re-registered presumably.

Supreme Coach & Travel, Hadleigh, Essex

This coach operator is now becoming a major schoolbus operator in the Southend area. Latest acquisition for this work is the seventh former Greater Manchester MCW Metrobus acquired — MRJ 37W.

Tanat Valley, Pentrefelin

Dennis Dart/UG Urbanstar R649 NEP and Freight Rover Sherpa D38 TKA are now route-branded for new service 446 (Llansilin-Welshpool-Newtown).

Alexander-bodied Leyland Fleetline HSD 87V is now in stock from Arriva Scotland West, joining sisters HSD 78, 84V acquired in 1995.

Leyland Leopard THH 615S has been sold, high-capacity Leyland Leopard/Plaxton Derwent B60F ABR 778S being delicensed.

Thamesdown Transport

New are Plaxton/Dennis Dart SPDs 181-3 (S181-3 BMR), allocated to service 1. They are the first of 14 with Dartline branding and are B45F — the largest seating capacity yet on a Dart?

Ex-London & Country Dennis Dominators 74-77 (F602/3/4/6 RPG) are named *Western Stalwart*, *Western Talisman*, *Western Harrier* and *Western Invader* respectively. Plaxton-bodied Volvo coach 372 (TIW 2372) is now 346 and re-registered PIL 5346.

The remaining Dennis Lancets, 24, 26 and 28 (EKA 224Y etc) have been withdrawn along with Leyland Fleetline 206 (PTD 644S) and Leyland Atlantean 242 (FBV 512W). It is expected that Fleetlines 206/7 (PTD 644/5S), Dominators 233/8 (LBF 233V, NRR 108W) and coaches 322/34 (J22 PJT, M934 FHR) are earmarked for early withdrawal also. Leyland Fleetline 199 (UMR 199T) remains in operation and it is expected that this may become a special event vehicle when withdrawn within the next two years.

Northern Counties-bodied Dennis Dominator 50 (MHR 50X), Dennis Lancets 21/3 (EKA 221/3Y) and Plaxton-bodied Ford coach JIL 6353 have gone to Wealden, Five Oak Green (dealer).

Thanks go to the Swindon Vintage Omnibus Society for these notes, via the Society's journal *The Waybill*, kindly made available to Fleet News and which covers operators large and small in this area and to which readers are recommended. Please send an SAE to David Nicol, 10 Fraser Close, Swindon SN3 3RP for further details of the SVOS, which celebrates 30 years this year.

Thorpe of London

Substantial fleet expansion has come with the delivery of 12 Dennis Dart SLFs with Plaxton Pointer 2 B29D bodywork for London Transport service 210. Noted are S530-40 JLM; the identity of the 12th is not yet known.

Tillingbourne, Cranleigh

Ex-Londonlinks Volvo B10M-50/East Lancs H45/31D H673/8/83 GPF were collected from Fox County; two were despatched direct to East Lancs for single-door (H45/35F) conversion, repanelling and other work before use. The third will go to East Lancs after initial use in dual-door configuration. Increasing peak loadings on services 140/141/142/144 have prompted their purchase, although they will also see workings occasionally on service 12 as well as rail replacement duties, based at Aldershot.

Bristol SUL4A/ECW coach 280 KTA happily managed to return to service 448 for the close of the season.

1999 sees the 75th anniversary of the formation of Tillingbourne Valley Services. The company is currently expanding its base of part-time drivers, applicants being welcome to approach the Traffic Office on 01483 276880. Many operators in this area are now suffering from a chronic shortage of drivers.

Tillingbourne has its first double-deckers in regular service. They are three ex-Londonlinks East Lancs-bodied Volvo Citybuses; H678 GPF is at work in the Reading area.
PHILIP WALLIS



Timetrak, Thorpe

Former London Buslines/CentreWest Renault S75/Wright B28F HDZ 5454 is now in stock.

The Traditional Motor Bus Co, Ryde

Former Seaview Services Bedford YRQ/Plaxton Derwent B49F 1 (VDL 264K) has been sold to local preservationists without being operated here, its place being taken by 5 (KPC 403W, PDL 298), also ex-Seaview (7) and to receive cream and red livery and re-registration as XDL 607.

Shanklin's Pony seasonal service 44 was extended right up to 31 October this year, using convertible open-top Bristol VRT/SL3s 3 and 4 (VDL 613S, UFX 856S) and with rare open-top Bristol RELL6G 2 (TDL 864K) as occasional back-up and duplicate when required.

Travel Merry Hill NX

Further new saloons are Volvo B6LE/Wright B37F 608-18 (R608-14 YON, S615 VOB, S616-8 VOA).

Inter-company transfers see the arrival of Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 263-5 (R263-5 XDA) from Smiths and Leyland Lynxes 1126/8, 1220/78 (G126 GOG etc) from West Midlands fleets.

MCW Metroriders 608/21/69/70 (D608/21 NOE, F669/70 YOG) and Leyland Nationals 102/4/5/14 (CBV 785S, UHG 734R, NTC 623M, PUK 634R) have been withdrawn.

Leyland Nationals 102/4 have passed to Cygnet of Darton, 114 to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer) for scrap. Metrorider 621 (D621 NOE) has gone to West Midlands Fire Service for use in training then scrapping, twin 632 (D632 NOE) passing to Wacton, Bromyard (dealer) also for scrap. Leyland Fleetline 6960 (BOK 498T, WDA 960T) has gone to the Screen Group.

Travel Your Bus NX

Further new deliveries are Volvo B6LE/Wright B37F 619-26 (S619-26 VOA), whilst Mercedes-Benz 811Ds have gone on inter-company transfer Merry Hill. Leyland National 106 (NTC 619M) has gone to Whiting, Carlton (dealer) for scrap.

Travel West Midlands NX

New saloons in stock are further Mercedes-Benz O.405N/B43F 1560-2/6-8/71-8/80/1/3/4/8/91, 1600/10/2-9 (S160, S61/2/6-8/71-8/80/1/3/4/91 VUK, R160 XOB, S610/2-9 VUK). Additionally, new O.405Ns 1607-9/11 were re-registered to S607-9/11 VUK prior to entering service.

Inter-company transfers see Leyland Lynx 1126/8, 1220/78 (G126 EOG etc) depart for Merry Hill. Lynx 1066 (C66 HOM) is now renumbered 9066 for its new role as a driver trainer — it is reallocated to the Training Centre along with similar 9062-4 and 1107 and MCW Metrobuses 2016/95, 2143/62 and 2413/7.

Substantial withdrawals to record are of Dodge S56 472 (D472 UHC), MCW Metroriders 618/28/34/48/74 (D618/28/34/48 NOE, F674 YOG), Leyland National 1731 (VNO 731S), Metrobuses 2001/2/14/7/20-3/7/36/8/56/8/60/3/4/9/73/88 (BOK 1V etc), 2109/17/24/46/51/5/6/8/63/7/77/8/90/2/7 (GOG 109W etc), 2201/6/7/10/1/9/26/31/3/6/8/40/1/5/7/50/8/64/6/76/83/4 (GOG 201/6/7/10/1/9/26/31/3/6/8/40/1/5/7/50/8/64/6W, KJW 276/83/4W), 2331/8/40/58/62/97/8 (LOA 331X etc), 2404/6/7/10/1/4/28/9/33 (LOA 404X etc) and 7007 (BOM 7V), Leyland Fleetlines 6634 and 6898 (SDA 634S, TVP 898S) and Iveco 49.10s 7584/93 (D584/93 NDA).

Metroriders 647-9 (D647-9 NOE) have gone to Wacton, Bromyard (dealer) for export; Leyland National 1731 (VNO 731S) is now with Cygnet, Darton; Metrobus 2227 (GOG 227W) is now with Golden Express and Leyland Fleetline 6898 (TVP 898S) is now in preservation. Metrobus 2063 (BOK 63V) has passed to the West Midlands Fire Service for use in training exercises before scrapping. PVS, Barnsley (dealer) has taken Metrobuses 2008/13 (BOK 8, 13V), 2109/17/33 (GOG 109W etc), 2202/11 (GOG 202/11W), 2341/52/62/85 (LOA 341X etc) and 2407 (LOA 407X) all for scrap; Whiting, Carlton (dealer) has taken Metrobuses 2036/69/73/88 (BOK 36V etc), 2146/55/90/7 (GOG 146W etc), 2210/64/76 (GOG 210/64W, KJW 276W), 2358 (LOA 358X) and 2404/10 (LOA 404/10X), also all for scrap.

Travelrich International, Clacton

A new arrival is Setra S250 Special/C48Ft S6 TRA, which was originally to have been registered S250 SET, but which was not available at the eleventh hour.

Trent Buses

Deliveries of new vehicles continue apace with Optare Excels 157-68 (S157-68 UAL) for service R5 (Nottingham-Derby) in purple and yellow livery with route branding, and the first to carry standard red and cream, 169-72 (S169-72 UAL); Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 286-95 (S286-95 UAL) of which 286/7 are in special blue 'Pegasus' livery for this named service from Leicester to Bakewell and jointly worked with Kinchbus, that concern having similar Vario S285 UAL; also new into service are Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2s 937-44 (S937-44 UAL), 937-9 at Derby and 940-4 with Barton at Nottingham.

Leyland National 524 (FRA 524V) is now transferred to the Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire fleet, repainted green and blue and carries Blue Apple fleetnames, whilst DAF-engined Leyland National 503 (YRR 503T) is being prepared as a driver trainer to replace elderly Leyland National trainer T2 (YRC 180, KCG 626L).

Leyland Nationals 451/61 and 503 (PRR 451R, RTO 461R, YRR 503T) and Leyland Olympians 700/11 (XAU 700Y, A711 DAU) are now withdrawn. The Olympians have passed to Stephenson, Rochford (dealer).

Universitybus, Hatfield

Another new 10.8m Dennis Dart SLF/Wright Crusader B41F is YDZ 2082. Dennis Javelin/Plaxton Premiere 320 C53F K754 UJO is a recent acquisition from Oxford Citylink.

Vista Coachways, Yatton

Former East Kent/United Counties Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R/Plaxton Paramount Express C53F VCO 802 (TSU 640) is now acquired, but DAF MB200/Plaxton Supreme IV former demonstrator KRX 860W has been withdrawn.

Wallace Arnold

The 1999 order for new coaches calls for 51 air-conditioned Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10Ms.

Weybus, Weymouth

This operator is now in receivership after losing its appeal against revocation of its operator's licence. The fleet recently standardised on the Freight Rover Sherpa and Iveco 49.10, with Sherpas 1, 2, 4, 7-12, 14, 17, 18, 20, 23 and 36 (D387 OOX, D63 OKG, D463 CKV, E119 RAX, D78 TLV, F949 CUA, F234 BAX, E101 OUH, E120/4 RAX, D244 OOU, D202 KWT, F200/3/6 YKG) and Ivecos 21, 205/7 (E251 ACC, E205/7 HRY) being the most recent numbered stock reported.

White Rose Group, Staines

Former London United MCW Metrobus DR101/8/MCW H43/28D WYW 34T is now in stock.

AEC Routemasters RM548 and RM2178 (SVS 618, WLT 548; CUV 178C) are now reported sold, ex-White Rose RM548 being the original *raison d'être* for the group's existence.

Williams, Deiniolen

Bristol VRT/SL3 VRT/SL3 BEY 938W is now in stock — the former Crosville DVG507 (YMB 507W) — this is not with Glyn Williams of Crosskeys as first report.

Wood, Alresford

Former Colchester Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1R/ECW H43/31F TPU 69R is now in stock.

Yorkshire Traction YT

New deliveries comprise Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F 342-9 (S342-9 SWF) for Doncaster.

Scania K113CRB/Van Hool 81 (N281 CAK) is now re-registered 4195 HE.

Renault S75 374 (G874 WML) and MCW Metrorider 540 (E540 VKY) have been withdrawn, 374 passing to RoadCar and 540 to Strathray.

Yorkshire Travel, Dewsbury

Leyland National 17 (ABA 17T) has passed to Mainline.

Group codes	
AA	— Arriva Passenger Services
BL	— Blazefield Holdings
EY	— EYMS Group
FG	— FirstGroup
GA	— Go-Ahead Group
MT	— MTL Holdings
NX	— National Express
ST	— Stagecoach Holdings
YT	— Yorkshire Traction

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Please don't forget to mark your envelopes 'Fleet News' — this is important and those which are not marked are likely to be delayed. Many thanks to the majority of correspondents who kindly note this request.

CHANNEL ISLANDS

GUERNSEY

Guernseybus

The MetroRider is now beginning to take ground from the Bristol LH, with a further five recently added to stock in the shape of former MTL London Optare MRO3/B26F MRL210/4/6/8/20 (J210 BVU etc), now numbered 65-69 respectively here. All are being resealed to B31F before entering traffic as LH replacements. LHs renumbered to make way are LH6Ls 65 (31906, *OJD 90R*), now 64; 69 (31928, *KJD 417P*) now 61 and 67 (31926, *OJD 74R*).

The unique forward-entrance Leyland Titan RT 19 (47312, *KYY 647*) was still on coastal service LC as late as 8 October, whilst failure of AEC Regent III RT 15 brought out Leyland Tiger PS1 open-top rebodied 16 in replacement in the latter part of the season.

LH6L 62 (3338, *OJD 52R*) has now been stripped and passed to the Airport Fire Service, following in the steps of Albion Victors of some years ago.

Thanks go to Jim Young of the Channel Islands Bus Society for a special update this month for Fleet News.

Reports to be sent, please, to Sandy Macdonald, 12 Morton Gardens, Maxwell Park, Glasgow G41 4AF, to reach him by 11 December for the February issue.

Aitken, Lochboisdale

Contracted Monday to Saturday evening services between Liniolate and Ardvachar on Benbecula and South Uist were introduced on 19 October.

Arriva Scotland West AA

G105 TND, a Mercedes-Benz 811D with Carlyle B33F bodywork, was obtained on loan from Arriva Manchester in June as one of the vehicles to be used on subsidised service 96/97, but a week after these services started it caught fire (also setting fire to an adjacent parked car) and was destroyed in Battlefield Road on 25 July. During its brief period with the company it operated in Beeline livery with its front painted into Arriva colours and was known by its owner's fleet number 75.

Alexander B20F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D D441 UHC, previously Arriva Cymru MMM41, was acquired by August. 881-3 (H681/75/6 GPF) are further Volvo Citybus B10M-50s with East Lancs H45/31F bodywork which had arrived from Arriva The Shires by October, while 886 (CWR 511Y) and 887 (A567 NWX) are further ECW H45/32F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1Rs which have come from Arriva Yorkshire where they were numbered 511/67. As anticipated last month, Carlyle-bodied Dennis Dart H242 MUK and Wright-bodied Dennis Dart M251 SPP had been transferred from Arriva The Shires by October and numbered 854/5. 854/82 are allocated to Inchinnan depot, 855/81 have been allocated to Johnstone and 886/7 are at Barrhead.

S780 RNE is a Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLF which arrived in October and entered service on various routes in all-over white, but it is not known whether it has been purchased or is on loan.

P10 LPG, the Shell-Gas LPG-powered Plaxton Prestige B42F-bodied DAF DE02GGSB220 demonstrator, arrived on loan to this company around 19 October and subsequently entered service from Inchinnan depot on the Paisley/Glasgow Airport service.

Mercedes-Benz 711D 264 has had its Food Giant advertising lettering replaced by Kwiksaver lettering. Alexander Strider-bodied Scania L113 507 has lost its advertising livery in lieu of Arriva colours; other vehicles now in these colours include Dennis Darts 854/5, Leyland Olympians 886/7, Mercedes-Benz 811D 325, and Volvo Citybuses 881-3. 325 was previously in F&L yellow livery.

Alexander Dash-bodied Volvo B6 buses 444/6 (M844/6 DDS) have been transferred to Arriva The Shires, ousted by Darts 854/5 mentioned above.

Avondale, Greenock

Operation of the SPT Clydebank and Dumbarton area Dial A Bus services passed to this company from 5 October and L300 RHU, a Mercedes-Benz 711D with TBP B24FL bodywork, was acquired in September from Wilson, Rhu for this work.

Bluebird Buses ST

472-9 (S472-9 JSE) are Dennis Dart SLFs with Alexander ALX200 B37F bodywork which were new in September, with 472-6 having been allocated to Inverness, 477/8 to Peterhead, and 479 to Macduff. Their arrival allowed the return of similar AA-liveried R460-4 LSO to their owner, Western Buses, after their period on extended loan.

860 (S860 VAT) is a Volvo B10M-62 with Plaxton C57F coachwork which was obtained on loan from Plaxton (dealer), Scarborough in September and put to work from Elgin depot. 485 (P377 DSA), a Volvo B6LE with Alexander ALX200 DP36F body, was returned to its owner Stagecoach Glasgow in September after having been used at Macduff depot during its sojourn.

Van Hool-bodied Volvo coach 558 (UOT 648) had been repainted into Stagecoach colours in lieu of Easton livery before being sold, and the Easton fleetnames on similar 545/49/51 had been replaced by Bluebird names by August.

Alexander PS-bodied Volvo B10M-55 577 has been given a mainly black overall advertising livery to the order of MacLeod's, a Perth car dealership.

Alexander TE-bodied Leyland Tiger coach 458 (WAO 643Y) left the fleet in June; Duple-bodied Leyland Leopard coaches 167 (HSR 136W, PSO 27W, TSV 718, ORS 106W) and 172 (KRS 682V, PSO 28W, TSV 719, ORS 107W) were sold to Ramm (dealer), Sudden in September while similar 1118 (RRS 46R) has gone to the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum, Lathalmond.

Cameron, Tarbert

William Cameron, trading as Harris Car Services, commenced a contracted evening and Saturday pre-bookable taxibus service between Tarbert and Scalpay with effect from 19 October.

Carlton, Glasgow

TFU 63T, a Roe H45/33F-bodied Leyland Fleetline FE30AGR, has been purchased from McColl, Balloch.

Cityliner, Port Glasgow

S463/4 JGB are a pair of Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 coaches which were new in August.

City Sprinter, Renfrew

This company is now based at Braehead Industrial Estate, Renfrew. Reeve Burgess B20F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D D94 VCC, previously Arriva Cymru MMM94, has been purchased while another example of the same combination, D501 RCK, is now out of use. Iveco 49.10 G358 FOP was not acquired but merely on loan from a dealer.

Clan, New Stevenston

Alexander B25F-bodied Renault S56 E326 WYS was acquired in August from McNairn, Coatbridge for use on the Bellshill-Holytown local service.

Cookley, Motherwell

From 3 October this operator introduced two half hourly local services in Bellshill, to Clay Crescent and to Orbiston.

Crawford, Neilston

Jonckheere C51F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 M272 POS was sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in August while Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 P281 XYS passed to Western Buses in October as the outstanding part of the deal concerning the earlier transfer of the Ardrossan/Glasgow service to that company.

Dart, Paisley

M53 (S751 LGA) is a Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario which was new in September. A similar vehicle, P698 HND, was being used in October on loan from a dealer and was allocated fleet number M54.

Other recent additions are Leyland National 2s, comprising NL116L11/2R-B52F N14 (KAJ 218W) ex-Stagecoach Hartlepool 18; NL116L11/1R-B49F N15 (KWA 25W) ex-Blue Triangle, Rainham; and similar KWA 27W, MDT 265W also ex-Blue Triangle and still to enter service.

Leyland Nationals N4 (SHN 407R) and N6 (UFG 52S) have been re-registered WJI 9368 and WJI 9371 respectively.

SPT subsidised service 205 (Fairhill-Hairmyres Hospital) which commenced on 27 September only lasted a week before a driver shortage forced the company to give up the contract, but fortunately First Glasgow immediately stepped in to replace it on a commercial basis once again.

DB Travel, Dumbarton

Mercedes-Benz L608Ds D966 UDY and D445 UHC with Reeve Burgess and Alexander bodies, both B20F, have been purchased. They were previously Arriva Cymru MMM66, 45. Another Reeve Burgess-bodied example of the same type, D552 RCK, is now out of use.

Essbee, Coatbridge

Another Leyland National purchased in August was Volvo-engined 11351A/1R-B49F XOY 748T, previously Arriva Teesside 3605. Further to last month's report, LUP 900T has been acquired rather than LUB 900T.

Ferguson, Cleland

From 19 October this company replaced former First Glasgow facilities on a commercial basis between Cleland and Wishaw via Carfin, Newarthill and Coltness. The new service operates hourly on Mondays to Saturdays.

Fife Scottish ST

615-9 (S615-9 CSC) are Alexander ALX200 B37F-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs which were new in October and have been allocated to Dunfermline depot. Other recent additions are 509 (F555 TMH), a Van Hool C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-60 previously in the Owen, Chapelhall fleet acquired in September by Stagecoach, and 781 (A996 SYE), another Leyland Titan TNLXB2RR with Leyland H44/26D bodywork to come from Selkelt where it was numbered 1996; it was allocated to Kirkcaldy depot when it arrived in August.

Recently acquired Carlyle-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811Ds H107/8 HDV have been numbered 6,7 and are also allocated to Dunfermline.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-55 articulated coaches 574-6 (P974-6 UBW) were transferred to the Western Buses fleet in October. Leyland Leopard 262 (CSF 162W), Leyland Tiger 468 (MNS 8Y), and Ailsas 860 (OSC 60V), 877 (UFS 877R), all of which have Alexander bodywork, have also left the fleet with 262 having been sold for scrap.

First Aberdeen FG

Twelve Wright-bodied Volvo B10BLE buses on order for this fleet have been diverted to First Bradford instead, with replacements for this fleet not due for some time.

Several vehicles were obtained on loan in September to ease the continuing vehicle shortage, comprising Alexander H44/35F-bodied Ailsa B55-10 810 (TGG 386W); Marshall H44/35F-bodied Ailsa B55-10s 817/8 (A483/4 UYS); and LAG Panoramic C49Ft 028 (RJI 5706, E242 HVV). The Ailsas are numbered A10, 117/8 in the First Glasgow fleet and are being restricted to school contract work, while the coach is numbered 6 in the First Leicester fleet.

Mercedes-Benz O.405 504 has finally lost its City Quick livery in favour of fleet colours with Gold Service branding, four months after having been displaced from its previous park and ride duties. Leyland Olympian 121 has been repainted into ivory and green in lieu of its Anderson Cars all-over advertising treatment.

Rear end advertising has been making a comeback in this fleet recently with two notable examples worthy of mention. Olympian 126 has been used to advertise the centenary events; initially it promoted the open day and rally but has now been modified to display a large barometer showing how much money has been raised for charity, with regular updates. Similar 120 has had a black advertisement applied for the Town & Country car dealership, featuring a life size picture of a car in similar fashion to the fast reversing Routemaster design on other FirstGroup fleets; the car had its own cherished number plate incorporated into the design but as this was more prominent than the bus registration B120 MSO it has since been painted out to avoid confusion!

First Glasgow FG

The 10 Volvo articulated buses with Wright Fusion bodywork due for delivery to this fleet will carry 55 seated and 85 or more standing passengers, and are expected in mid-1999. A similar vehicle from the First Manchester fleet may, however, be obtained for a week's trial before then.

More buses transferred from English Arriva companies to Arriva Scotland West include some East Lancs-bodied Volvo Citybuses ex-Londonlinks, which have been converted to single door. 881 (H681 GPF) is seen here. BILLY NICOL



FIRST HAVANA?

At a time when a breaker's yard in Yorkshire is the destination for virtually all redundant First Glasgow buses an eyebrow was raised some months ago by the news that 10 time-expired Leyland Atlanteans had been sold for further service in Cuba. This news has now been modified to the extent that the buses in question are to be Leyland Leopards.

Having initially been approached by the Transport & General Workers' Union to see if it could help, the bus company is sending the vehicles to Cuba to help save a 600-bed hospital from closure. They will be used to help doctors and nurses to get to and from the Ambrosia Grillo Hospital in the Sierra Maestra mountains, as their existing transport fleet has given up the ghost. If replacement buses had not been made available the hospital would have had to be closed and the company has been happy to make a humanitarian gesture.

The hospital's new fleet, around 17/18 years old, is expected to ensure transport for the hospital staff for the next five years. They will be loaded with medical supplies and equipped with £10,000-worth of Dunlop tyres, then shipped to the Caribbean as part of a project known as Salud. Details of the vehicles are given in Fleet News Scotland.

GLASGOW-EDINBURGH COMPETITION

In the November issue it was reported in Fleet News Scotland that Owen of Chapelhall had increased the frequency of the Highway Express service between Glasgow and Edinburgh to every half-hour, thus increasing competition with Scottish Citylink on this route, and that several coaches had been acquired from companies in the Stagecoach group. More can now be said about that, and subsequent developments.

In fact the six-vehicle Owen business was actually acquired by Stagecoach shortly thereafter, accounting for the appearance of Stagecoach vehicles on hire prior to the acquisition of the fleet. It is believed that it was the initial intention of Stagecoach to continue the Highway Express service, albeit reduced again to its original hourly frequency, until 18 October when it was to cease operating. From the start of the winter Citylink timetable on 19 October Stagecoach was to become a Citylink contractor running about one third of the Glasgow-Edinburgh service, the arrangement being that Stagecoach-liveried vehicles would be used and that revenue would be shared under an agreement similar to those which Citylink has with some other contractors.

All of this went according to plan until the week before the changes were due to take effect. Then it became known that

there was to be a new entrant to the game in the shape of White Ribbon Coaches of East Kilbride, or Gilchrist Coaches, which is now owned by White Ribbon. The company had resolved to carry on where Owen was expected to leave off and was introducing a Glasgow-Edinburgh express service on 19 October, which appears to have caused Stagecoach to change its plans.

From 19 October therefore there were ostensibly three coach operators competing with Scotrail for the lucrative business between Scotland's two largest cities. Citylink has introduced its winter timetable and is using Stagecoach vehicles in their own livery in addition to Citylink-liveried vehicles of other contractors; Stagecoach has continued the Highway Express service using six coaches in all-over white livery and based at the Stagecoach Glasgow depot; and White Ribbon/Gilchrist was also running its white-liveried vehicles on the route. A total of up to 10 departures per hour in each direction were being offered by these firms in competition with the half-hourly rail service, with very cheap fares promotions available too.

However the situation lasted only four days as White Ribbon appears to have withdrawn at that time.

HARTE'S LATEST BUS

The latest development with the Harte Bus Company of Greenock has recently added a new dimension to the quality the company offers its travellers on the Midton and Trumpethill routes with the introduction of a new Plaxton/Dennis Super Pointer Dart on them. This bus has enabled the company to expand the 'Pram Bus' facility it introduced some years ago, before low floor buses were common, using a Mercedes Benz 709D.

The original concept was to always have one bus on service capable of carrying prams with driver assistance guaranteed, and a special timetable available showing the relevant journeys. Introduction of the scheme won the company a Good Bus Practice award. Now, with a super low floor bus in the fleet, the opportunity has been taken to expand the scheme to the point where 27 journeys in each direction between the town centre and Midton (seven each way also serving Trumpethill) are marketed as Pram Bus. The new bus, suitably named 'Easy Rider', provides most of them and the earlier, smaller pram bus is seen as a back up suitable for carrying smaller prams or buggies. Infirm passengers also benefit, of course, and some wheelchair-bound residents of Gourrock have now been able to begin using public transport, having previously been unable to do so.

Wright B43F-bodied Scania L113CRLs SS84-91 (S684-91 BFS) and similarly-bodied Scania L94s SS92-4/6-100 (S692-4/6-9, 701 BFS) entered service in September/October in corporate pastel livery, from Parkhead depot as have similar SS80-3. SS88 attended the Showbus rally on 27 September, while SS92-4/6-100 are eight of the first volume production examples of the Wright Access Fline body for a FirstGroup company. Two other new arrivals in September were MA213/4 (S271/2 LGA), Mercedes-Benz O.810s with Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F bodywork finished in all-over red; these vehicles have been allocated to Knightswood depot. When they arrived they carried registrations S416/7 GUB.

Further Plaxton B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz O.810s arrived in September in the shape of MA201/2/5-8 (P701/2/5-8 PWC), previously Essex Buses 421/2/5-8, while MA162 (M201 VWU) is a Mercedes-Benz 709D with Plaxton B25F body previously numbered 2201 in the First York fleet. Another Plaxton B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz O.810 arrived in October in the shape of MA212 (R404 HYG), previously First Calderline 2404. All of these buses are in the all-over red livery and allocated to Knightswood depot for use on Clydebank local services, as are MA203/4/6 reported last month.

R739 TMO, a Plaxton Pointer B41F-bodied Dennis Dart SLF, was on loan from Plaxton (dealer), Scarborough for a week in September and used from Knightswood depot on service 68 (Clydebank-Milngavie).

Ailsas A120/2-5, Leyland Tigers ST337/44/58, MCW Metrobus MB64, Volvo B10M SV478, Volvo Citybuses AH7, 27, 92 and Volvo Olympian VO27 have been repainted into all-over red. Volvo Citybuses AH38, 72, 89 were still in orange and black in mid-October although previously reported as being in all-over red. All Superbus and Kelvin First Express fleetnames appear to be being replaced by First Glasgow ones.

Alexander-bodied Ailsa A10 and Marshall-bodied Ailsas A117/8 were loaned to First Aberdeen from 22 September.

The ten buses sold for further use in Cuba in October comprised Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopards SL247/8/55/7 (TSU 647/8/5/3W) and SL264/6/7/9-71 (LUS 434/6/7/9/40/31Y); this deal has taken the place of the previously reported sale of 10 Leyland

Atlanteans to Cuba, with the latter vehicles having now been sold to dealers. Other disposals within FirstGroup in October comprised Alexander-bodied Leyland Tigers CT29 (A9 KCB, WLT 770, A119 GLS), ST323-7 (OUS 13-7Y) and ST334/6/7 (A34/6/7 VDS) to First Lowland, while Alexander-bodied Leyland Tigers CT207 (ALS 104Y), ST318-22 (OUS 18-20, 11/2Y) and ST343/9/52 (A23/9,32 VDS) passed to First Midland Bluebird.

Very large numbers of disposals to dealers can also be recorded this month, having taken place between July and September. The vehicles involved comprise Alexander-bodied Ailsa A18 (CSU 226X); Roe-bodied Leyland Atlantean LA547 (WAG 373X), Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlanteans LA1139 (TGG 754R), LA1237 (XUS 608S), LA1257/63/71/85/91/5/8, 1304 (FSU 73, 80/8, 102/8/12/5/21T), LA1315/30/1/3-7/42/5/9 (LSU 372/87/8/90-4/9, 402/6V), LA1354/5/62/4-6/8/9/71/83/5/9-27, 1411/3/22/4/6/9 (RDS 568/9/41/3-5/7/8/50/62/4/78-81/6, 600/2/11/3/5/8W), LA1432/4/9 (SUS 600/2/7W), LA1440 (UGB 193W), LA1441/2/4/5/7 (CUS 296-9, 301X); Duple-bodied Leyland Leopard CL59 (JGE 29T); Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopards CL135/9 (PGA 835/2V), CL162 (RMS 402W), SL132 (YFS 92S), SL241 (PUS 151W), SL249/52/3 (TSU 649/52/3W); Leyland Nationals SN44 (WAS 769V), SN50 (YFS 307W), SN60 (ASN 160W); Roe-bodied Leyland Olympians LO2, 6, 8, 10 (CGG 825/9/31/3X); Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympians LO18/9, 21 (ESU 5, 6, 8X); ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians LO27 (KGG 147Y), LO111 (ULS 96X); Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tigers CT10 (JSB 36Y, WLT 741, PGE 442Y, WLT 371, TFS 319Y), CT12 (TFS 321Y, WLT 408, TFS 321Y); CT15 (A104 EPA, KCB 758, A104 EPA); Alexander-bodied Leyland Tigers CT202/5 (FGG 602/5X); ECW-bodied Leyland Tigers CT238 (TPC 108X), CT239 (WPH 116Y); Alexander-bodied MCW Metrobuses DM103 (BLS 672Y), DM119/26/7/9 (ULS 619/26/9/35X), DM133/4/8/42/8 (BLS 422/5/9/35/42Y), DM153/5/7/8 (A472/4/6/8 GMS), MB6-20 (EUS 101-15X); MCW-bodied MCW Metrobuses MB21-8/30 (KGG 162-9/71Y), MB31-4 (MUS 309-12Y), MB36/8-45 (A730/2-9 RNS); MCW Metroriders GM47 (D471 UGA, 87-D-22542), MM35 (D472 UGA, 87-D-22541), MM37 (D474 UGA, 87-D-28221); GM10/2/8, 33-5, MM53/9, 62 (E943/50/29/40/1/5/38/4/7 XYS), GM41, 55/6, 60, 74, MM88/9, 97 (E179/99, 2007, 197/85/6/94 BNS),

MM8 (F238 EDS); MM24 (F345 MGB, 89-D-13), MM25 (F290 MGB, 89-D-14), MM27 (F347 MGB, 88-D-31372), MM29 (F302 MGB, 89-D-12); GM30, 64 (F111/2 NPU), GM31/2 (F201/3 RVN); and Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811Ds MA138/41 (F628/34 XMS). Most went to Wigley, Carlton but some were taken, initially at least, by Roulston, Glasgow.

Former Central SMT Alexander B53F-bodied Leyland Leopard T64 (KGM 664F) had passed to the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum, Lathalmond by August, having previously been with non-PSV Wallace, Rattray.

First Lowland FG

Alexander-bodied Leyland Tigers acquired recently from First Glasgow comprise TE C47F-bodied TRBTL11/2RP 119 (A119 GLS, A9 KCB, WLT 770, A119 GLS); TS B53F-bodied TRBL11/2Rs 173-7 (OUS 13-7Y); and TS B53F-bodied TRBLXB/2RHs 364/6/7 (A34/6/7 VDS).

Recent transfers into this fleet from First Midland Bluebird comprise Plaxton-bodied Leyland Leopard 468 (HSU 273, OUF 51W, 411 DCD, LPN 357W); Wright-bodied Scania L113CRLs 520 (S520 UMS), 521/2 (R521/2 BMS); Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D 606 (C821 SDY); Reeve Burgess-bodied Renault S75s 1474/7/8 (H474/7/8 OSC); and Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelins 2408 (J8 SMT, J864 WSC), 2410 (L110 OSX). 606 is being used in a non-PSV capacity.

Transfers in the opposite direction comprise Plaxton-bodied Dennis Dart SLF 205/25-7, Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tiger 331, Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlantean 750, Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybus 1172, and Alexander-bodied Dodge S56 1402.

Alexander Royale-bodied Volvo Olympians 1307/19 have been given route branding for service 86 (Clerwood-Dalkeith) in small lettering between the lower deck side windows and the side advert space. Plaxton-bodied Dennis Dart 219 carries route branding for service 66 (Balerno-Wallyford) above its side windows.

First Midland Bluebird FG

520 (S520 UMS) is another Wright Access-ultralow B40F-bodied Scania L113CRL which was new in August in pastel livery, and took part in the Aberdeen Centenary celebrations.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Tigers have also been transferred into this fleet recently from First Glasgow, comprising T type C49F-bodied TRBTL11/2R 104 (ALS 104Y); TS B53F-bodied TRBL11/2Rs 18-20, 11/2 (OUS 18-20, 11/2Y); and TS B53F-bodied TRBLXB/2RHs (A23/9, 32 VDS) for which fleetnumbers are not yet known.

Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D F610 XMS has been numbered 615 and allocated to Bannockburn depot.

Recent transfers from this fleet to First Lowland comprise Plaxton-bodied Leyland Leopard 468; Wright-bodied Scania L113CRLs 520-2 (only recently delivered to this fleet); Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D 606; Reeve Burgess-bodied Renault S75s 1474/7/8; and Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelins 2408/10.

Vehicles transferred recently from First Lowland comprise Plaxton-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs 205 (P205 NSC), 225-7 (R225-7 GSF); Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tiger 331 (A20 SMT, A331 BSC); Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlantean 750 (DSA 250T); Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybus 1172 (B172 KSC); and Alexander-bodied Dodge S56s 1402 (D402 ASF).

Mercedes-Benz 811D 615 is now in First Midland Bluebird livery while Leyland Atlantean 759 and Renault S75s 1477/8 are in First SMT livery.

First Stop Travel, Renfrew

From 2 November this operator began new commercial service 234 between Govan bus station and Croftfoot in Glasgow, running every 20min on Mondays to Saturdays and paralleling First Glasgow service 34.

Galson, Barvas

Contracts for the provision of Stornoway/Lionel and Barvas/Carloway evening services have been won by this company, with effect from 19 October.

Glen, Port Glasgow

This company has had its licence revoked by the Traffic Commissioner, in that it is no longer of good repute. Both the company and proprietor were disqualified from holding or obtaining a public service vehicle operator licence for two months with effect from the close of business on 6 November. Accordingly, the hospital workers' service between Brookfield and Inverclyde Royal Hospital, Greenock was cancelled from that date.

Guide Friday

VPA 152S is a Park Royal H43/30F-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1R which arrived in October suitably lettered for a new 40min service linking Waverley Bridge and the former Royal Yacht *Britannia* in Leith, which commenced on 19 October.

Two other new arrivals for the Edinburgh operation are KYV 396X and KYN 310X, Leyland Titan TN15s with H44/28D bodywork, which are for the Edinburgh Airport service. They are in a new version of the Airbus Express livery which is dark green with cream roof and upper deck window surrounds, and incorporates larger decals and an aircraft logo. The six Leyland Atlanteans currently in Airbus Express livery are all expected to be replaced by Leyland Titans, East Lancs-bodied ARC 639/42T having already been withdrawn.

Further to the notes in the October issue, it is understood that Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlantean ORS 216R is still owned by Stirling Council but leased to this company. A third vehicle operated in Stirling this year was OCR 307M, the East Lancs-bodied Leyland Atlantean previously used in Edinburgh and Glasgow last year. The Stirling buses were originally garaged and maintained by Midland Bluebird but the contract for this later passed to Christie, Alloa.

HAD Coaches, Shotts

S617/8 KUT are a pair of Caetano Enigma C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-62s new in August. From 11 October this company has operated an hourly Sunday subsidised service 393 between Wishaw and Cleland on behalf of SPT.

Harte, Greenock

S609 HGD is the new Dennis Dart SLF with Plaxton Pointer B39F bodywork mentioned above. It entered service at the end of September, and carries 'Easy Rider' names on its revised version of fleet livery which incorporates more dark brown on the roof and rear. Optare Vecta IIB 6819 has been repainted into the same style.

Henderson, Tarbert

Devon Conversions C19F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L508D NMA 725Y was sold to Ramm (dealer), Sudden in August.

Highland Country RN

Ikarus-bodied Volvo coach LXI 2630 (B918 CSU) was returned to Travel Dundee by July but similar 666 TPJ (D312 ETS) was still on loan at that time. ECW-bodied Bristol VR 3644 (RAN 644R) was sold to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall in June.

Highlands & Islands, Coatbridge

This offshoot of Essbee Coaches has obtained the Argyll & Bute Council contract to provide winter services on the Fionnphort, Craignure and Tobermory routes on Mull, from 18 October until 10 April next year.

Highwayman, Errol

Two vehicles added to the fleet earlier this year were Freight Rover Sherpa D874 ONW ex-Stepend, Glenmavis (further details unknown) and Plaxton C53F-bodied DAF SB2300DHTD585 D620 YCX ex-Selwyn, Runcorn. The Sherpa is not being used.

Hutchison, Paisley

C651/9 XDF, Alexander B20F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608Ds previously Cheltenham & Gloucester 651/9, have been added to this fleet.

King, Kirkcowan

P158 VSU is a Mercedes-Benz 711D with Adamson C24F coachwork acquired in August ex-Brown, Bathgate. Various contracted journeys on local services commenced on 28 September comprising 367 (Stranraer-Portpatrick, six journeys on Sundays), 408 (Stranraer-Kirkcolumb, Friday and Saturday evenings), 414 (Stranraer-Newton Stewart or Kirkcolumb, Mondays to Saturdays request only), 415 (Newton Stewart and Minigaff circular, three journeys on Sundays), 430/500 (Stranraer-Dumfries, six journeys on Sundays).

Lanes, Cumnock

The largest vehicle yet owned by this operator is HDZ 5456, a Wright B28F-bodied Renault S75 acquired in August ex-CentreWest RW56.

Liddell, Auchinleck

VFT 203T is an MCW H49/37F-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68A/2R purchased in August ex-Sunderland & District 3703.

Lothian

New limited stop service X50 (Waverley Bridge-Britannia Visitor Centre, Leith Docks) commenced on 18 October, and operates daily every 40min.

MacAskill, Edinbane

Kathleen MacAskill, trading as Glenedin Coaches, commenced two new subsidised local services from 19 October, between Dunvegan and Upper Halista (Mondays, Thursdays and school holidays) and between Portree and Vatten (Tuesdays, Fridays and school holidays).

McColl, Balloch

Roe-bodied Leyland Fleetline TFU 63T has been sold to Carlton, Glasgow.

McCulloch, Stoneykirk

Three additional journeys per day, Mondays to Saturdays, on service 367 (Stranraer-Portpatrick) were introduced by this operator on a subsidised basis from 28 September.

MacDonald, Bernera

Friday and Saturday evening journeys between Stornoway and Breacleave were introduced with effect from 23 October.

MacDonald, Carloway

Monday to Friday early morning journeys between Barvas and Carloway were introduced with effect from 19 October.

MacEwan, Amisfield

Another new subsidised service was commenced by this operator from 12 October, numbered 31 and running between Edinburgh and Newcastle or Gateshead (Sundays only) via Galashiels and Jedburgh. One return trip per day is offered.

Duple-bodied Leyland Tiger RIB 9362 (2174 PH, KHG 185W) is now with Meffan, Kirriemuir.

McKindless, Wishaw

More Leyland Nationals joined this fleet in August in the shape of 1151/1R-B49F NRD 162M ex-Gateshead & District 4858; 11351A/2R-B49F OAE 759R ex-Tynemouth & District 4859; 10351A/2R-B36D THX 190S ex-Gateshead & District 4828; and 10351A/1R-B41F DDW 431V ex-Sunderland & District 4861. All are Volvo-engined. A further addition at that time was Roe H43/30F-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68B/1R KPJ 267W, previously London & Country AN267.

Recently acquired Leyland National RJ1 5344 has been painted into the navy, grey and red McKindless Express livery.

New services mentioned last month are numbered 12 (Wishaw-Parkside) and 44 (Bellshill-Newarthill) while another First Glasgow replacement started on 28 September is 93 (Parkside-Forgewood).

MacLennan, Laxay

This operator, now trading as Town & Country Coaches, has won the contract for the provision of Monday to Friday evening journeys between Stornoway and Ranish.

MacMillan, Northbay

Friday evening journeys between Castlebay and Eoligarry were introduced with effect from 23 October.

MacNeil, Castlebay

Friday evening journeys between Castlebay and Vatersay were introduced with effect from 23 October.

McTaggart, Greenock

Plaxton C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-61s A388 XMC and C669 XRU were added in August, both having previously been with Telling-Golden Miller, Byfleet. Plaxton C49F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 N957 DWJ was also obtained at that time ex-Impact, Carlisle.

MacVicar, Linclate

This Benbecula company, trading as WMV Motor Hire, has won the contract to provide Monday to Saturday evening journeys between Creagorry, Balivanich and Gramsdale on Benbecula, commencing from 19 October.

This Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Leyland Tiger was new to Shearings and passed with that operator's bus services to Timeline. It was one of a number bought by FirstBus for Leicester and Northampton, in this case the latter, and has now emigrated to First Lowland, in which fleet it is no188 (G56 RND), seen here at Musselburgh.
RICHARD WALTER



Mairs, Aberdeen FG

New Irizar-bodied Scania K113CRB 730 has become the official team coach for Aberdeen Football Club replacing Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-60 731 which retains the cherished mark J11 AFC for the present.

Martin, Spean Bridge

The registration for the Glasgow-Fort William service was cancelled with effect from 22 October.

Meffan, Kirriemuir YT

RIB 9362 (2174 PH, KHG 185W) is a Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R with Duple C35F coachwork which had arrived by August ex-MacEwan, Amisfield. Other additions comprised Alexander C49F-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3E/4R XNR 453 (CRS 657) which arrived in July and PMT C19F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D VLT 217 (E104 UNE) which arrived in August, both from the Strathtay fleet where they were numbered 524 and 128 respectively.

XNR 453 was re-seated from C49F to C42F on arrival and VLT 217 is on loan to cover for Careline-bodied Leyland DAF 400 G754 RVJ which has moved in the opposite direction. It is now a 16-seater, formerly nine, and was painted into fleet livery by August.

By August Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopard YSF 79S had been transferred to Strathtay and Dormobile-bodied Freight Rover Sherpas C778 GOX, D220 GLJ and D569 VBW had also left the fleet.

Norris, Glenelg

Diana Norris, trading as Diversions, introduced one return journey between Kyle of Lochalsh and Arnisdale on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays with effect from 3 October.

Orion, Wemyss Bay

Robin Hood B23F-bodied Iveco 49.10s E156/8 UKR were sold to Ramm (dealer). Sudden earlier this year.

Park, Hamilton

Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-62s N311-4 NYA were re-registered N258/9/61/2 PYS respectively in August. N259 PYS carries National Express livery.

Rennie, Dunfermline

This company has kindly supplied details of various fleet developments which have taken place over the past six months or so; this assistance is particularly welcome as little *reliable* information is obtained about this or other Fife fleets apart from that from the PSV Circle.

XBO 121T is a recently acquired Bristol VRT/SL3/501 with ECW H43/31F bodywork new to National Welsh but latterly with B&D Coaches, Stockport while more exotic arrivals are S107/8 KJF, another pair of Iveco EuroRider 391.12s with Beulas C49F coachwork which were new in October. They introduce another livery variation to the fleet although other vehicles have been repainted into the style of livery introduced by the 1997 intake of Iveco coaches, including Duple 425s GDZ 3363 and NXX 451, Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tigers HIL 6811/2, and Plaxton-bodied DAF A76 LLS.

Re-registrations not previously recorded are those of ECW-bodied Bristol VR DEX 213T to BRX 381T, Plaxton Paramount 4000-bodied Neoplan N122/3 PIJ 601 (WCY 701, C357 KEP) to C137 BMS; and Beulas-bodied Iveco EuroRider P153 FBC to PIJ 601.

ECW-bodied Bristol VRs WHH 414S, GTX 740W and Robin Hood-bodied Iveco 49.10 D35 DNH are currently being broken up for spares, while similar Iveco D726 YBV is also out of use together with Alexander-bodied Ailsa LJH 393W (KSD 99W). GTX 740W had sustained accident damage in November 1997 and has donated its Leyland engine to similar CJH 126V, previously Gardner-engined.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlanteans RSR 48/9R, RRD 141/2R (RUS 327/6/30/1R) were sold for scrap in March to Whiting (dealer), Pontefract without having been used after their re-registration in September 1997. During June, former Bluebird Buses Duple Caribbean-bodied Leyland Tiger A44 LLS (LSK 478, A165 TGE) was sold to Pagoda Travel, Milton Keynes. In September the unique former Bluebird Buses Alexander-bodied Volvo B57 XSA 5Y was sold to the AW Group, Ratby together with Plaxton Paramount 4000-bodied Neoplan N722/3 TJI 1687 (C687 RRR, A3 BOB, C179 KHG), former Bluebird Buses Duple Caribbean-bodied Leyland Tiger A45 LLS (LSK 479, A166 TGE), former Western Scottish Berkhof Emperor-bodied Volvo B10M-61 B958 MFS (GDZ 3363, B552 EGG, WLT 546, B188 CGA), and Ikarus Blue Danube-bodied Volvo B10M-61 F657 DLS (NXX 451, F418 LNL).

Riverside, Barrhead

Mercedes-Benz M419 GUS has been given a green, yellow and orange advertising livery for Tell Mama bar/diner but retains fleet livery on the front.

Shuttle Buses, Kilwinning

Two additions in October were Reeve Burgess B20F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D C417 VVN ex-East Yorkshire TCW 833T to 875 YYA and Mercedes-Benz E634 DCK ex-Goosecroft, Denry.

Leyland Tiger coach GSU 551 is now in fleet livery. Recent re-registrations to record are those of AEC Reliance TCW 833T to 875 YYA and Mercedes-Benz 709D H124 YGG to IUI 9892.

Carlyle B20F-bodied Ford Transit C89 AUB did not stay long in the fleet, leaving in October for Ramm (dealer), Sudden.

Silverdale, New Stevenston

First Glasgow services between Airdrie and Glenmavis were replaced by this operator on a commercial basis with effect from 29 September, and operate half hourly on Mondays to Saturdays.

Slocoach, Motherwell

Brian Johnston, trading as Slocoach, has registered a Monday to Saturday local service between Watling Street and Leven Street in Motherwell.

Stagecoach Glasgow ST

Transfers between this fleet and Western Buses in September resulted in the departure of Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz O.810 036 (R36 LSO) and Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D 037 (RBZ 2621) and the arrival of Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D 009 (N609 VSS) and Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D 226 (WDZ 6951). Alexander-bodied Volvo B6LE 377 (P377 DSA) was on loan to Bluebird Buses during August and September.

The Pollok-Cardonald service 7 which was to have been withdrawn recently has been continued on a revised route.

Steele, Annan

Subsidised local service journeys introduced by this operator from 28 September included X6 (Moffat-Carlisle, one return journey on Fridays), 117 (Lockerbie-Hightae, two journeys on Mondays to Fridays), and 382 (Moffat or Lockerbie-Carlisle, four journeys on Sundays).

Steele, Stevenston

AVK 149V, a Leyland Atlantean AN68A/2R with Alexander H49/37F bodywork previously Busways 329.

Stepend, Glenmavis

D538 RCK is a Mercedes-Benz L608D with Reeve Burgess B20F bodywork acquired in September ex-Northern Bus, Anston.

Strathtay YT

Further to the September issue, ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians 906/7 (TSO 22/5X) were not transferred to Lincolnshire but have remained in this fleet to cover for accident damaged vehicles, and are allocated to Montrose and Dundee depots respectively.

MCW Metrorider 159 (E559 AWF) has been repaired and put to work from Arbroath depot; this vehicle was damaged in a road accident whilst being delivered to the company in February from its previous owner, parent company Yorkshire Traction.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian 918 has been given an overall advertisement to publicise the Tayside Police Anti Road Rage Hotline while similar 916 is now in standard fleet livery. Both of these vehicles were re-seated from H47/32F to H43/29F (coach seats) in September.

Dormobile-bodied Renault S56s 108/10/14/7/8 (G891/3/4/7,900/1 FJW) were sold for scrap earlier this year together with Dormobile-bodied Freight Rover Sherpa 126 (D568 VBW). Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopard 524 (XNR 453, CRS 657) was transferred to Meffan, Kirriemuir in July and PMT-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D VLT 217 (E104 UNE) went on loan to that company in August in exchange for Careline-bodied 16-seat LDV 400 G754 RVJ.

Travel Dundee NX

Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybus 92 and Wright-bodied Volvo B10L 144 were fitted with Hanover electronic destination equipment in August.

Irizar-bodied Volvo coach 241 (TC6) was returned by Highland Country by July but similar 243 (TC8) was still on loan to that company at that time.

Alexander-bodied Ailsa 301 (SSN 245S) was sold to non-PSV Stress Management, St Andrews in June.

Wait, Chirnside

John Cockburn, trading as A. Wait & Son, commenced Monday to Friday service 37 between Chirnside and Eyemouth on 2 November, with up to four return journeys per day.

Western ST

195-7 (P974-6 UBW) are Volvo B10ML-55s with Plaxton Premiere Interurban AC71F coachwork which were transferred to this fleet from Fife Scottish in October. They were numbered 574-6 by their former owner. Another addition in October was P281 XYS, a Volvo B10M-62 with Plaxton Premiere C57F coachwork acquired from Crawford, Neilston as the outstanding part of the deal concerning the earlier purchase of the Ardrossan/Glasgow service from that company.

Former Bluebird Buses Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds G260-2/70 TSL have been numbered 059/62-4. Alexander-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs 460-4 (R460-4 LSO) were returned by Bluebird Buses in September after an extended period on loan. Leyland Titan 972 is now in corporate livery.

Transfers between this fleet and Stagecoach Glasgow in September resulted in the arrival of Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz O.810 036 (R36 LSO) and Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D 037 (RBZ 2621) and the departure of Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D 009 (N609 VSS) and Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D 226 (WDZ 6951).

1959 Alexander L35/32RD-bodied Leyland Titan PD3/3 D1542 (MSD 406) arrived at the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum, Lathalmond for preservation during the summer, having previously been used as a shed in the Nethybridge area.

Wilson, Rhu

TBP-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711D L300 RHU was sold to Avondale, Greenock in September.

Group codes

AA	—	Arriva
	—	Passenger Services
FG	—	FirstGroup
NX	—	National Express Group
RN	—	Rapsons
ST	—	Stagecoach
YT	—	Yorkshire Traction

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

D. Anderson, Arriva Scotland West, Bluebird Buses, M. Currie, Dart Buses, J. Dunne, First Glasgow, Harte Buses, A. Hogg, S. Hulse, P. Mudel, G. Munro, B. Nicol, PSV Circle, Rennies of Dunfermline, Shuttle Buses, J. Sinclair, W. Southgate, Stagecoach Glasgow, Steele's Coaches, W. Taylor, R. Walter, Western Buses, and Wrights have supplied news items this month and their assistance is gratefully acknowledged.



Nicolson of Borge, on the Isle of Skye, has this high-capacity UVG-bodied Dennis Javelin, R849 CJS. It has three-plus-two seating for 69. MURDOCH CURRIE

Reports on vehicles in Northern Ireland only should be sent, please, to: **G. Irvine Millar, 54 Castlemore Avenue, Belfast BT6 9RG**, and those for the Irish Republic to: **John A. Doherty, 21 Whitebeam Avenue, Clonskeagh, Dublin 14**.

IRISH MAJOR OPERATORS

Translink

At the time of writing the first of the orders for new buses for Citybus and Ulsterbus had been announced. They include 85 Wright Renown-bodied Volvo B10BLEs, the first time that Wright has been favoured with an order for full-size citybuses by Translink or its predecessors. The order for express citybuses comprises 10 Mercedes-Benz O.405Ns, of which four are articulated — the original tenders called for eight rigid and two artic. All 10 will have coach seating for CityExpress services.

Ulsterbus

Carrying temporary fleet number 2016 during a short period in service at Larne was Scania/Wright Axxess Foline demonstrator S350 SET.

Reinstated at Newtownards following a protracted period out of service due to electrical repairs is Van Hool-bodied Leyland Tiger 594 (OXI 524). Also back in service there, following accident repairs, is Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-type 1054 (KXI 1054). From reserve come Alexander-bodied Bristol RELs 2453/72/4 (WOI 2453/8472/4), the last two on loan from Citybus, and Leyland Tiger/Wright Contour 543 (EXI 5543). Alexander-bodied Bristol REL 2380 (UOI 2380) has been placed in reserve.

Two Bristol LHs, acquired in the take-over of the fleet of the Martyrs Memorial Church, Belfast in 1992 and held in reserve for over two years, and retained in the hope of attracting preservationist owners have been sold. Ex-London Country LHS/ECW B35F GPD 301N was acquired in 1984, and ex-Bristol Omnibus Bristol LH/ECW B43F SWS 774S in 1985 and have been acquired by H. McAllister and W. Armstrong respectively.

Citybus

Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-type 2608 (LXI 6608) has returned to service following repairs as a result of accident damage. Alexander-bodied Bristol RELs 2468/71-2/4 (WOI 8468/71-2/4) are reinstated, with 2472/4 currently on loan to Ulsterbus. On loan from Ulsterbus is DAF/Duple Caribbean 683 (RXI 6683).

One of the few remaining Mercedes 608D coaches, no2 in the Flexibus fleet, with PMT coachwork has been placed in reserve. Wright-bodied Mercedes 709D 861 (NXI 6861) has been reinstated in its place.

Dublin Bus

More new Alexander-bodied Volvo Olympians are RV432-8 (98 D 20432-5) at Summerhill, and RV436 (98 D 20436) at Donnybrook, where the remainder of the batch (RV437-45) are also due. As a result Bombardiers KD87, 240 have been transferred from Summerhill to Phibsborough.

Withdrawals to note include GACs KC51, 176 (ZSI 51, LZS 176) at Conyngham Road, which have replaced there by KC43/4, the former being reinstated. Bombardier KD9 has returned from Donnybrook to Clontarf, where KD21, 253 have been reinstated.

Most alternate journeys on route 18 (Sandymount-Palmerstown) now stop short of the two termini at the RDS Ballsbridge and Palmerstown Upper.

Bus Eireann

Volvo B7R/Plaxton Prima 320 C55F demonstrator, R342 EDB has been in use on Dublin-Edenderry and Cork-Ballincollig services.

Following a fire aboard Caetano-bodied Volvo B10M, VC18, the whole batch (VC1-20) has been temporarily withdrawn pending investigation. As a result result some Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10Ms have been reinstated, ie VP21-4/9-30/3/5 at Broadstone, VP28, 31/4 at Dundalk and VP25-7 at Galway. As noted last month these vehicles had been due to return to the UK.

Recent transfers involve Irizar-bodied Scania SI21 from Galway and, SI24-5 from Ballina, both to Waterford and SI22 from Galway to Broadstone.

Plaxton Premiere-bodied Volvo B10Ms VP40, 63 have gone from Galway to Ballina, VP61-2 from Stranorlar to Dundalk, VP60 from Sligo to Broadstone, VP67 from Waterford to Galway VP68-9 from Waterford to Ballina and VP78-9 from Broadstone to Waterford and Galway respectively. Transferred from Tralee are Van Hool T815H express buses EVH6/7 to Cork, and Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tigers PL77/8 to Limerick and PL92 to Dundalk. Caetano-bodied Volvo B10M VC9 is transferred from Ballina to Galway and VC10 from Tralee to Broadstone. Ex-Ulsterbus Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopard LA6 is transferred from Tralee to Cork.

Newly reclassified as schoolbuses are GACs KS78 at Galway, KS153 at Ballina, and KS155 at Dundalk.

Withdrawn are Leyland Leopard PSU5/4R MGS17 (17 IK) at Dundalk, ex-Ulsterbus Bedford YRQ/Alexander BA1 (75 D 34, HOI 1727) at Galway, and ex-Ulsterbus Bristol REL/Alexander BG6, 11 (75 D 88, JOI 3027, 76 D 131, LOI 2059) and Marshall-bodied Bedford SB BM14 (78 D 137) at Limerick.

IRISH INDEPENDENTS

Flyerbus, Dublin Airport

New is Optare Delta 98 D 61842. Used as a relief on this internal park and ride service is Leyland National 72 MH 503, new to London Transport.

Alpine Coaches, Enniskerry

In use on a new hail-&-ride service between Bray and Enniskerry, with certain journeys extended to Powerscourt and Glencree is MCW Metrorider 89 WW 3963.

Finnegans, Bray

In use on a new town service is Iveco 86 WW 767



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APRIL

FirstGroup Twintrack proposals Optare buys Autobus China Motor Bus loses franchise

MAY

FirstGroup into Hong Kong End of Alexander PS-type FirstGroup's 'First' names

JUNE

Rural bus grants Renault and Iveco to merge bus activities Northern Bus sold to Mainline Arriva takes part of Timeline Capital Logistics pay increase Orders for FirstGroup in Hong Kong

JULY

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AUGUST

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SEPTEMBER

Transit sells to Stagecoach Wallace Arnold stays in the family TWM's gas buses launched formally FirstBus launches corporate interior Green light for Greenways

OCTOBER

Mayflower bids for Dennis Optare Solos for Salisbury Volvo BTL launched Metroline buys Scottish Citylink National Express buys US schoolbus operator

NOVEMBER

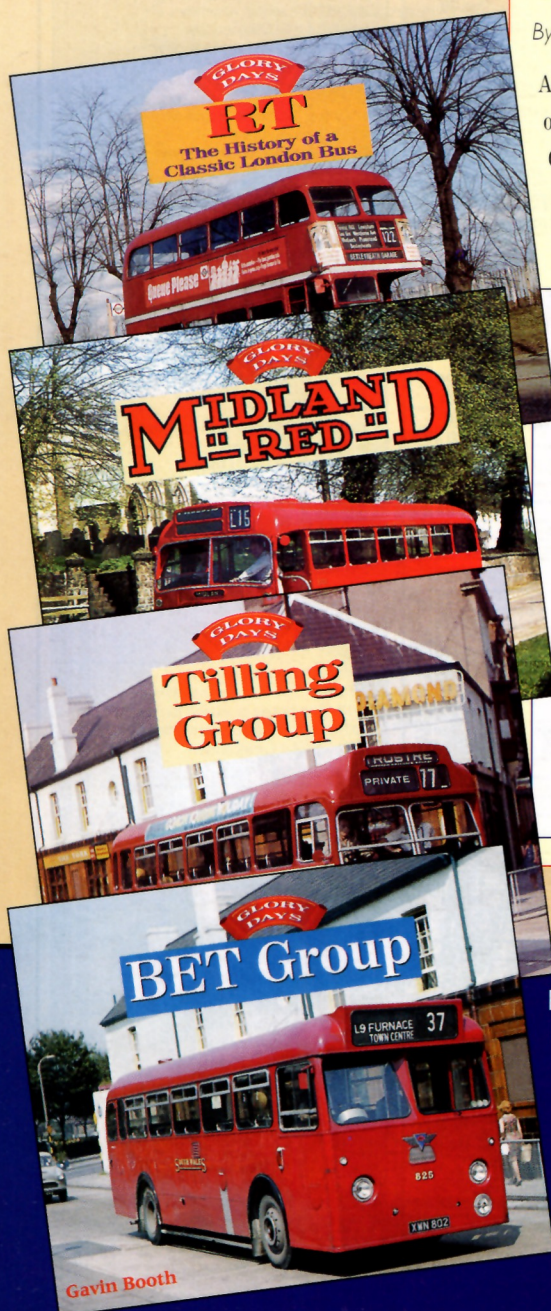
Mayflower set to get Dennis Stagecoach grows in NZ but out of Kenya Grey-Green ends commuter runs EvoBus opens UK headquarters

DECEMBER

Mayflower gets Dennis Timeline sold to FirstGroup Go-Ahead into airport handling Q-Drive in receivership More new models from Volvo (B6BLE and Super Olympian)

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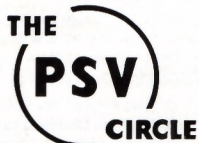
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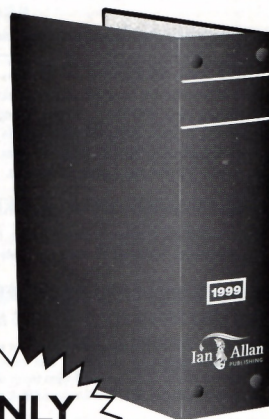
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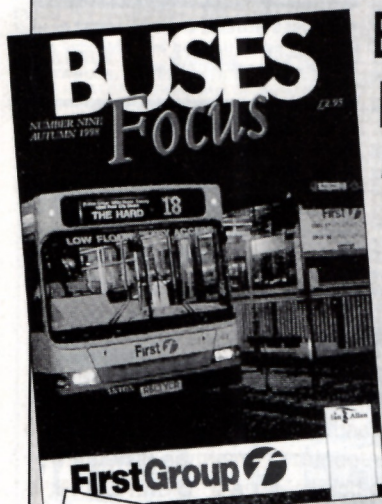


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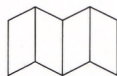
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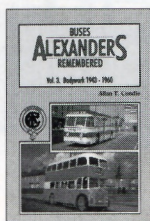


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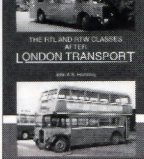
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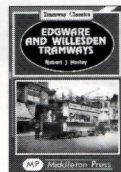
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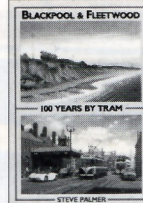
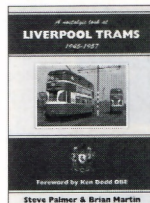


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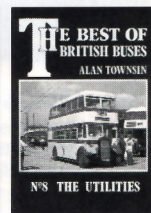
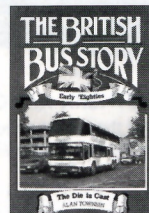
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NEW



RELEASES FOR NOV 1998

1:76 Scale/00 gauge precision diecast models

NEW



25001 Bristol RELL SOUTHERN NATIONAL

This model is the first release of the tall flat screened version of the RE. In Tilling green livery it continues to build the Southern National fleet. POD 831H, fleet number 2732 is on route 22A to Portland Bill.



24314 BET YORKSHIRE TRACTION

In a rather attractive bus livery used at the end of their service life. SHE 155, fleet number 1167 appears on route 20 between Barnsley and Manchester.



14404 Leyland National LONDON UNITED

Our first model to appear in the livery of this South London operator. Looking very attractive in Red & Grey with white banding. AYR 335T, fleet number LS 335 is on route H37 to Richmond Station.



22706 Alexander Y Type LANCASTER CITY

Building our Lancaster fleet, these colours suit our Y type extremely well. WFV 19R, fleet number 19 is on route X40 to Morecambe Battery.



20623 Pointer/Dart YARMOUTH BLUE BUS

Building on the popularity of the Yarmouth Blue Bus fleet, M923 TEV fleet number 412 is on route 8 to James Paget Hospital via Town Centre.



18103DL Atlantean LEEDS

Carrying adverts for the Merlion Shopping Centre. Reg number CUB 338C, fleet number 338 is on route 16 to Bramley.



15625 Routemaster HALIFAX

Seen here in all the splendour of the Halifax Joint Committee livery, and still waiting for its fleet number. 214 CLT can be seen in regular service on route 46A to Hebden Bridge.



24806 Mercedes Hoppa THAMESWAY

In the popular East London livery of Thamesway, this model illustrates how the minibus has been used to open up new routes. H391 MAR, fleet number 391 is on route W17 Walthamstow, Church Hill/Coppermill Lane.



NEW



25503 RML Routemaster LONDON TRANSPORT

The first release of our RML, depicts RML 2272 which was rushed into service for comparison trials with the XA and XF vehicles, and was unique as it did not carry any advertising. Reg number CUV 272C is on route 76 to Stoke Newington.



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